

**THE MYTH OF “THE BATTALION THAT
VANISHED” AT GALLIPOLI**

AS A PARADIGM OF PANTHEISTIC ECOLOGY¹

Bir Panteistik Ekoloji Örneği Olarak

Gelibolu’da “Sırta Kadem Basan Tabur” Miti

Şebnem KAYA²

Abstract

With its overwhelmingly monistic viewpoint, ecocriticism, like the natural sciences it benefits from or shares with, adheres to a priori phenomena, marginalising, for the most part, the supernatural. Yet this study which does not conceptualise the natural and supernatural in contradictory terms postulates that – though rejected by science because it lacks the “regularities of nature” – the supra-physical correlates with natural or physical phenomena and therefore can be considered within the scope of ecocriticism, referring as proof to “the battalion that vanished” at Gallipoli, Turkey, reportedly on 12/21/25/28 August 1915. That day, during one of the bloodiest battles of the Dardanelles Campaign, a British troop marches into an unusually low-slung cloud and disappears forever. Eyewitnesses interpret and document what they saw as divine intervention, and in time, albeit on the periphery of World War I, the nebulous event turns into a myth inseparable from the literary ecology, as well as the collective (environmental) memory, of both the Turkish and Allied sides.

This study is intended to ruminate on the mentioned hard-to-comprehend event as a myth once and still being verbalised and written about by the many, adopting a dualistic approach like “Clouds do not swallow men, the case of ‘the battalion that vanished’ excepted.” While not downplaying the materiality of the happening – by touching upon such meteorological issues as the atmospheric conditions conducive to the formation of clouds and the features of different types of clouds alongside the topography of the battlefield – the study, using as its base the Gallipoli soldiers’ accounts and derivative narratives, highlights the metaphysical dimension of the ecologically mysterious event, calling attention to the likelihood that the natural and the supernatural may segue into and complement each other and the Divine may manifest Himself through material nature, a course conceivable to call “pantheistic ecocriticism.”

Keywords: Myth, “the Battalion that Vanished,” Gallipoli, pantheistic ecocriticism, Buket Uzuner, *The Long White Cloud-Gallipoli*

Özet

Baskın tekçiliğiyle ekoeleştiri, faydalandığı veya paylaşım içinde olduğu doğal bilimler gibi, önsel fenomene bağlı kalarak genelde doğaüstünü bir kenara iter. Ancak, doğa ile doğaüstünü çelişkili görmeyen bu çalışma, bilim tarafından “doğanın devamlılığına” sahip olmadığı için reddedilmesine rağmen, doğaüstünün

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² Assist. Prof. Dr., Hacettepe University, Faculty of Letters, Department of English Language and Literature, Ankara, TÜRKİYE

doğal veya fiziksel fenomenle bağlantılı olduğu ve dolayısıyla ekoeleştirinin kapsamına girdiği tezini öne sürmekte; kanıt olarak da dediklerine göre 12/21/25/28 Ağustos 1915'te, Gelibolu'da "sırta kadem basan tabur"u göstermektedir. O gün, Çanakkale Savaşı'nın en kanlı çarpışmalarından biri yaşandığı sırada bir İngiliz taburu, alışılmadık derecede alçakta duran bir bulutun içine doğru yürür ve bir daha ortaya çıkmamak üzere kaybolur. Görgü tanıkları bunu ilahî bir müdahale olarak yorumlar, yazarlar ve zaman içinde, Birinci Dünya Savaşı'nın kıyısında olmakla birlikte, adı tam olarak konamayan olay, hem Türk hem Müttefik tarafın ortak (çevresel) belleği ile edebî ekolojisinin ayrılmaz bir parçası konumundaki bir mite dönüşür.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, anlaşılması zor söz konusu olayı, "Bulutlar insan yutmaz, Gelibolu'da 'sırta kadem basan tabur' vakası hariç" gibi ikicil bir bakış açısıyla, birçok kişi tarafından hâlâ anlatılan ve hakkında yazılan bir mit olarak yorumlamaktır. Çalışma – bulut oluşumuna yol açan atmosferik koşullar ve farklı bulut türlerinin özellikleri gibi meteorolojik konular ile savaş alanının topoğrafik özelliklerine değinmek suretiyle – olayın maddeselliğini göz ardı etmeden, Gelibolu askerlerinin anlattıklarını ve daha sonraki türev anlatıları temel alarak ekolojik açıdan gizemli olayın deneyüstü boyutunu vurgulamakta; bunu yaparken de doğal ve doğaüstü unsurların iç içe geçerek birbirini tamamlıyor ve Tanrı'nın kendisini özdeksel doğa aracılığıyla açığa vuruyor olabileceğine dikkat çekmektedir ki bu yaklaşıma "panteistik ekoeleştirisi" adı verilebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mit, "Sırta Kadem Basan Tabur," Gelibolu, panteistik ekoeleştirisi, Buket Uzuner, *Uzun Beyaz Bulut-Gelibolu*

Introduction

Shall I loot mosaics from St. Sophia, and Turkish Delight and carpets?
Should we be the turning point in history? Oh god! I've never been quite so
happy in my life, I think. [...]. I suddenly realized that the ambition of my life
has been – since I was two – to go on a military expedition against
Constantinople[,] (as cited in McCrery, 1992, p. 54; Moorehead, 1998, p. 92;
Thacker, 2014, p. 83; Richardson, 2013, p. 130)

said Rupert Brooke in a letter³ all agog, probably voicing the mindset and psychology of many other soldiers who went on the "Constantinople Expedition." By reason of "his romanticism, his eagerness and his extreme physical beauty," the twenty-seven-year-old poet was singled out as the symbol of the Gallipoli campaign (Moorehead, 1998, p. 92) like Byron who was, nearly a century ago, turned into a symbol of the Greek War of Independence (Richardson, 2013, p. 130). Nonetheless, Brooke died on the way to Gallipoli⁴ and left the rest to fight for the "Constantinople" dream alone.

On 25 April 1915, only two days after Brooke's death, perhaps an ominous foreshadowing of their chances of winning, thousands of soldiers from England, New Zealand, Australia, and France reached Eurasia, back then Ottoman territory, and landed en masse at Cape Helles, the southernmost point of the Gallipoli peninsula. Their aim was to go as far as İstanbul through the straits, Dardanelles and Bosphorus, and have a bigger share of the ecosphere. Yet, while planning to cross the small peninsula, they got stuck on the landing site, retaliated against by the Ottoman troops – under General Otto Liman von Sanders (1855-1929) and Lieutenant Colonel Mustafa Kemal (1881-1938). After three odd testing months and much bloodshed, the Allied forces decided to make another landing, this

³ He wrote the letter in February 1915 for Violet Asquith, the daughter of Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith (Richardson, 2013, p. 130; Thacker, 2014, p. 83; Fromkin, 2009, p. 23).

⁴ He died on the island of Skyros in the Aegean Sea on 23 April 1915, possibly of blood poisoning caused by a mosquito bite the poet could not overcome as he was still trying to recover from the sunstroke he had suffered in Egypt (Thacker, 2014, pp. 84-85).

time further north at Chunuk Bair, *Conk Bayırı*, and Suvla Bay in order to seize the hills and by that means gain the upper hand in the vicinity.

Findings and Comments

Suvla, they surmised, would be an ideal spot to land (McCrery, 1992, pp. 55-56) because, first, in Nigel McCrery's (1992) words, “[i]t offered a safe anchorage.” Second, “the area was known to be lightly defended and [third,] the salt lake which was about a mile-and-a-half wide was known to dry up during the summer” (p. 56). However, on 6 August, the day they disembarked, and on the following consecutive days, they saw how mistaken they had been about the cove. As Phil Taylor and Pam Cupper (1989) put it,

[f]or months the Anzac troops [...] looked across the Suvla Plain, surrounded on three sides by formidable hills, like an enormous amphitheatre, the salt lake glistening harshly, and the yellow aridity of the ground, which looks deceptively flat and uncomplicated, broken here and there by a few stunted olive trees. The feeling of desolation is almost tangible. There is hardly any shade, the glare from the Salt Lake assails the eyes, the ground is coarse and thirsty-looking and the sentinel hills sweep in a great arc from north to south, grim, aloof, and hostile, quivering in the heat. (p. 213)

For months on end in the growing season at sea level or zero altitude, a factor instrumental in raising the temperature per se, the soldiers had to battle with the incoming rays of the sun, needless to say, hitting them from above, and albedo or earthshine, from the ground below. What is more, extreme insolation, contributory to Brooke's recent demise, was the least of their worries, compared to the heavy losses they were enduring under gunfire. Mystifying them from the very day of the landing on, Ottoman snipers with the territorial imperative created a horrorscape at Suvla, defended by Mustafa Kemal, which would leave an indelible mark on even later generations, whether or not directly related to the Gallipoli soldiers, rendering it impossible for them to keep their hearts at a distance from what happened during the mentioned military venture. Bolstering this claim is balladeer Eric Bogle's (1989) anti-war song “And the Band Played Watzing Matilda,” a section of which is a downcast satire – from the point of view of a hypothetical soldier harking back to himself and others who came from diverse backgrounds but incurred the same fate – of the way the Allied troops disembarked at Suvla Bay:

How well I remember that terrible day
When our blood stained the sand and the water,
And how in that hell that they called Suvla Bay,
We were butchered like lambs at the slaughter . . . (13-16)

The ensuing days during which they kept striving for achievement, “achievement” now meaning mere survival, were no different from the one that infused Bogle's above lyrics. By 9 August – to give the numbers given by Kevin Fewster, Vehici Başarın, and Hatice Hürmüz Başarın (2003) – more than “2300 Australians” and “6000 Ottomans” were killed (p. 109) wholesale. An extract from an Australian's diary describes the plethora of death all around them in graphic detail:

[Bodies] were lying everywhere, on top of the parapet... in dugouts and communication trenches and saps; it was impossible to avoid treading on them. In the second line the Turkish dead were lying everywhere, and if a

chap wanted to sit down for a spell he was often compelled to squat on one of 'em. (as cited in Fewster, Başarın, & Başarın, 2003, p. 110)

Then, as noted in another soldier's diary, the bodies, "fully exposed to the sun for several days, [...] sw[elled] terribly and [...] burst... many men w[ore] gas protectors" (as cited in Fewster, Başarın, & Başarın, 2003, p. 111) so as not to be exposed to the adverse quality of the airshed or smell putrefaction as aerobic and anaerobic bacteria, needing and not needing oxygen,⁵ slowly consumed the corpses from both inside and outside.

Those who were fortunate enough to remain alive were not only seeing and inhaling death but also losing their limbs, their bilateral symmetry and so on, the horror of which Second-Lieutenant Roland Pelly could talk about if he still had a chin. Instead, he would indite in his diary that

[i]t only felt like a jab from a needle and I carried on till one of my men saw me and said 'Oh Lord, it's our officer.' At this I put my hand up to my face and found a sea of blood. The bullet had broken both sides of my lower jaw shredded my tongue and blown my teeth out through the right cheek leaving my chin hanging by the skin on my chest. (as cited in McCrery, 1992, p. 78)

Pelly who went through this ordeal was a member of the 5th Battalion of the Royal Norfolk Regiment under Colonel Sir Horace Proctor-Beauchamp (1856-1915) when they attacked Tekke Tepe, on 12 August 1915,⁶ to take it from Mustafa Kemal's acolytes. He would be pell-mell taken to the beach, and from the beach to a hospital, and survive (McCrery, 1992, p. 78) to write down these woeful lines.

As regards the rest of the battalion, that day, during one of the bloodiest battles of the Gallipoli campaign, the Fifth Norfolks took shelter in a farm building where they would be cornered and targeted by the Ottoman snipers hidden in trees (McCrery, 1992, p. 72; Clarke, 2014, p. 24). The battalion managed to get out of there, though suffering many casualties; however, in the sequel, McCrery (1992) states, "Colonel Beauchamp, with 250 officers and men, continued to advance through a wood towards the Turkish positions," and "most of the men that followed Colonel Beauchamp were never seen again" (pp. 80-81).

The Norfolks were recorded as missing, instead of killed (McCrery, 1992, p. 83), and soon started to be mythicised in their absence as heroes. Their story hit the headlines of the national papers, and King George V (1865-1936) issued a telegram to cite the battalion as lost⁷ sidestepping the very strong possibility of death. Curiously enough, even after their bodies were found in a mass grave⁸ in a valley close to the combat zone in 1919 (Johnson, 2010, p. 59; Beckett, 2003, p. 86; McCrery, 1992, p. 114; Hutchinson, 2006, p. 74), in other words, after the bodies and together with them facts were unearthed, what happened to the Norfolks and their whereabouts did not cease to be spoken and speculated about. So much so that in the course of time their story, which had already

⁵ The information on the types and living characteristics of the bacteria specified above is taken from Gillen, 2007, p. 34.

⁶ The date is given in Beckett, 2003, p. 86; Travers & Çelik, 2002, p. 390; and Hutchinson, 2006, p. 74.

⁷ For the mentioned papers and letter see McCrery, 1992, p. 91.

⁸ Travers and Çelik write that the soldiers "were found [...] to have been shot in the head or bayoneted, presumably after capture" (2002, p. 392).

been inconclusive from the outset, underwent a transformation acquiring an even more clouded character or an air of mystery.

In 1965, Frederick Reichardt who was, as a sapper, with the New Zealand Expeditionary Force – commanded by General Sir Ian Hamilton (1853-1947) – produced and signed a statement, approvingly signed by three other ex-servicemen who had been there about Tekke Tepe when the battalion vanished into thin air (McCrery, 1992, p. 110; Thacker, 2014, p. 84; Clarke, 2014, p. 25). The statement, to quote David Clarke (2014),

described how, on a morning they identified as 28 August 1915,⁹ they saw six or eight odd-looking ‘loaf of bread’ shaped clouds, light grey in colour and all exactly alike, hovering in the sky above a position known as ‘Hill 60’ that was held by the Turks. As they watched, the peculiar looking clouds remained perfectly still and never changed position despite the presence of a prevailing wind. Beneath them was another cloud, more dense and solid-looking. Roughly 800 ft long and 200ft high, it seemed to straddle a dry creek bed or sunken road. From a distance of around 2,500 yards, the men then saw what appeared to be an entire British regiment marching up the sunken road that led through the valley directly towards Hill 60. (p. 25)

In the continuation of the document, Reichardt says:

When they arrived at this cloud, they marched straight into it, with no hesitation, but no one ever came out to deploy and fight at Hill 60. About an hour later, after the last of the file had disappeared into it, this cloud very unobtrusively lifted off the ground and, like any fog or cloud would, rose slowly until it joined the other similar clouds . . . On viewing them again, they all looked alike ‘as peas in a pod’. All this time, the group of clouds had been hovering in the same place, but as soon as the singular ‘ground’ cloud had risen to their level, they all moved away northwards . . . In a matter of about three-quarters of an hour they had all disappeared from view. (as cited in Clarke, 2014, pp. 25-26)

The sapper’s account shrouded in mystery was retold in an article the British ufologist William Francis Brinsley Le Poer Trench (1911-1995), the 8th Earl of Clancarty, wrote to advertise his book *The Eternal Subject: Chariots of Yesterday - UFO’s of Today*¹⁰ (1973) in Australia’s *Sun-Herald* on 29 July 1973 (Denzler, 2001, p. 131; Long, 2014, p. 60; McCrery, 1992, p. 114). After that publication, the story once again came up in British papers (McCrery, 1992, p. 114) and joined the category of the “[s]tories about mysterious clouds and mist that hid British troops at times of peril” (Clarke, 2014, p. 24). Such stories or micro-narratives, so to speak, “common during the war [. . .] were,” according to Clarke (2014), “often associated with divine intervention” (p. 24), and in line with them, the Gallipoli event, as told, apparently pointed to an ascent from the tempestuous and deadly battleground to a calm and safe oasis in the sky, incorporating supernatural causation into the materiality of things. Or, it rather presented the supernatural on the same footing as the natural/material.

⁹ The date is given as 21 August in McCrery, 1992, p. 110.

¹⁰ In *The Eternal Subjects*, the writer dealt with human-alien encounters, adding a spiritual dimension to the topic through references to, for instance, saints capable of flying and the cases of “sightings” in the Bible.

The story which seems to have started as an Anzac account locally at Gallipoli and travelled to the West gained currency and popularity in its place of origin, too, bespeaking a transcultural universal logic or universal structures of mind. Turkish accounts with the same broad strokes, though with variations in the date of the event and the colour of the cloud, soon intermixed with the earlier account, transubstantiating it into a phenomenon of oral culture and history with the same sense of spirituality, the same supratemporal conceptualisation, a sure sign that the nations whose armies once had contested did not have contesting approaches to the Gallipoli event and cloud.

In present-day Turkey, “Rahmet Bulutu” – tenable to translate as “the rain cloud” or “the cloud of blessing” – which passed from one generation to the next by word of mouth is one of the most popular Gallipoli miracle stories concerned with the wind and the clouds and predicated on the conviction that the Ottoman soldiers on the spot that August day were spared from the rigors of the battlefield by the elements (Yılmaz, 2015, pp. 110, 124, 126, 129). In other words, the cloud, looked at from this perspective, came to the Ottomans’ rescue as a supernatural agent, saved them from the circumstances by carrying away their enemy, an ecomiracle reflective of a theistic stance in sync with the Turks’ beliefs both prior and subsequent to their conversion to Islam.

Bora Yılmaz (2015) stresses, with quotes from Mircea Eliade’s (1907-1986) *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (1958), that being “the highest,” the sky is redolent of divinities and that “Gök Tanrı,” the Sky Deity, had a pivotal status in the pantheon, as well as the lore, of the Turks before they accepted Islam (p. 125). Yılmaz (2015), in addition, relates the supernatural story of the dematerialisation in question to Islamic narratives of divine assistance such as the Battle of Badr¹¹ (13 March 624 CE; 17 Ramadan 2 AH)¹² during which, it is recounted, “a cloud [...] descended on the area where the enemy forces were deployed, and the array of the enemy was destroyed” and the Battle of Hunayn¹³ (in late January/early February 630 CE; Shawwal 8 AH)¹⁴ in the course of which “a black cloud plummeted from the sky, came between the two sides, and the fight went in the Muslims’ favour” (p. 126; translation mine).

Interpretations of this type with a focus on spirituality keep the past event up to date and maintain the popularity of the narrative pertinent to it not only through an exploration of the event but also through the criticisms they are levelled at. The Gallipoli narrative on the subject of the “vanished battalion” which is, though documented, largely understudied by scholars remains on the agenda in Turkey because of the split between faith and science – since science that insists on the natural world and seeks natural causes precludes *menkibes*, faith-based tales, from spilling over its domain – and because these stories the gist of which is belief are deemed all grist to the political mill.

The story, ostensibly controversial in Turkey over the last few years, is recaptured and kept alive in literature as well, as evinced by Buket Uzuner’s (1955) *Uzun Beyaz Bulut-Gelibolu* (2001) rendered in English as *The Long White Cloud-Gallipoli*. In this novel of

¹¹ The battle was fought between the Madinan Muslims and a polytheistic Meccan army at the Wells of Badr, and despite the fact that the Muslims were outnumbered by more than three to one, the engagement ended with the dispersal of the Meccan army (Wilkinson, 2015, p. 83).

¹² The date is given in Wilkinson, 2015, p. 83.

¹³ The battle was fought at Hunayn between the Muslims and the pagan tribes of *Hawazin* and *Thaqif* refusing to accept the Prophet Muhammad and his message. It ended with the victory of the Muslims who had the numerical superiority (Emory C. Bogle, 1998, p. 23; Carimokam, 2010, p. 418).

¹⁴ The date is given in Al-Tabarī, 1992, p. 7, footnote 20.

hers, Uzuner underlines nested ideas like, Zeki Taştan (2005) argues, “the absurdity of war” (p. 122) which leaves scars of the deepest kind and the remedial effect of compassion beyond cultural barriers, at the same time centralising the cryptic Gallipoli cloud to make an explanation of it in terms of the Divine.

To somewhat analyse the content of the text for clues to this general statement, Victoria Taylor, a psychologist from Wellington, New Zealand, who is bothered in the extreme by a series of nightmares in which she sees her great-grandfather alleged to have died during the Gallipoli campaign – “writhing bloodied on the Gallipoli shore, extending a hand toward her and pleading: ‘You are the one who will find me Vicki, you’re the one who will come in search of me’” (Uzuner, 2002, pp. 158-159)¹⁵ – ends up at Gallipoli to track down her ancestor. There she makes friends with a “Turkish granny,” Auntie Beyaz, and “beg[ins] to feel an extreme fondness for [her]” (p. 168).

The old woman proves to be a great comfort to Vicki – short for “Victoria” appropriated for the Turkish spelling of the name, “Viki,” used in the original text. After the ghastly dreams that captured and impinged on her mind for years, as a symptom of the everlasting impact of the war, “at Auntie Beyaz’s house, she [Vicki] achieve[s] what doctors call ‘quality sleep’” (p. 158). Besides, as an intuitive, gurulike person not constrained by the confines of time or place – which is perhaps suggested, before anything else, by her name “Beyaz” meaning “white” and therefore recalling the clouds, heavenly formations free from earthbound limits – Auntie Beyaz serves as Vicki’s connection with the past. The way she comports herself makes it explicit that Auntie Beyaz has limitless as well as timeless vision. She behaves as if she can, in the now of the action, conjure up the cloud that hung over the Suvla Plain many decades ago: “She looked up at the ceiling while she was describing them, as though gazing at the sky and searching for the clouds even now” (p. 159) and “sounded as confident as though she had personally been there and seen the clouds on August 12, 1915” (p. 159). While conveying the story of “that famous cloud of Gallipoli” (p. 158) well embedded in the collective consciousness of both the Anzacs’ descendants and the Turks, thereby fulfilling the function of a tie-in between people of separate nations, Auntie Beyaz also reveals, with a spiritual impulse, that she fathers the event on divine agency or a maximally great being indwelling in the natural, material world:

Day was dawning. The southerly wind was blowing mighty strong, but the clouds didn’t seem to move an inch. There was a separate cluster of clouds beneath the one in the sky, this one near touching the ground itself. It didn’t look like a cloud of fog, it looked hewed out of some rough cloth. This thick cloud, which looked almost about to fall down to earth, had simply appeared near the British at the Suvla Bay. What can I say, *an act of God*. (pp. 159-160; italics mine)

She characterises the cloud as “still a bit of a mystery” (p. 160) and – reminiscent of the discord between science and religion – explains “why those three Zealander privates [who had been witness to the happening] waited fifty years before giving testimony about the soldiers who disappeared into the cloud” (p. 168) as follows:

¹⁵ Unless otherwise stated, all references hereafter will be to Buket Uzuner’s *The Long White Cloud-Gallipoli* published in 2002.

They were afraid, *mari*.¹⁶ One of them was a field officer, though you should check that writing, I don't understand these things... I think he was a mechanic, poor thing. They were afraid, *mari*, they were afraid of being mocked, Vicki *Hanim*.¹⁷ People will laugh at you, my girl, if you say that two hundred something soldiers boarded a cloud and left! (p. 168)

The expression of the soldiers' feelings in these sentences is also revelatory of Auntie Beyaz's identification with them. She vicariously goes through the experience with the veterans and maybe for that reason calls the soldiers, at another point in the novel, "*askercik*[...]" (p.162) – "*asker*" being to the effect of "soldier" and "*-cik*," a diminutive suffix – in the untranslated Turkish version of the novel. As a matter of fact, with that single vocable Auntie Beyaz discloses much more than the empathy she feels with the soldiers: She reduces their ages and treats them as if they had been children to take a fancy to.

When Vicki mentions the BBC "documentary" (p. 160) *All the King's Men* saying, "It claimed that the unit that vanished at Gallipoli was massacred by the Turks; a kind of genocide... Actually, my dad quipped that the Turks now had a 'Gallipoli Express' in addition to their *Midnight Express*" (p. 160), she creates a tension and causes Auntie Beyaz to reply tersely – with "The Turks fought fair and honest at Gallipoli, Vicki *Hanim*. They were dying to preserve their country and their liberty" (p. 161) and "Invaders are unjust. Whoever they are, wherever it is, invaders are unjust. [...]. And the unjust are always cursed" (p. 161) – but their conversation does not escalate into an argument with harsh, regrettable words. Quite the reverse, it turns out to be counterproductive. Although based on mutual recriminations over the atrocities perpetrated at Gallipoli, the battle of words between the two characters gives way to an insouciant, heart-warming dialogue when Auntie Beyaz attempts at a description of Sir Ian Hamilton with all her naïveté and positivity: "Who was that handsome English *Pasha*,¹⁸ supposed to be the commander of the whole enemy army, you'd know his name. Supposed to have been a poet besides" (p. 162). By calling the General "that Hamilton *Pasha*" (p. 162), she also wipes away or at least trivialises cultural differences, tickling Vicki:

Vicki could not help laughing. She was amused to hear a tall, blond, noble English general dubbed a 'pasha', with all the words associations of an 'Oriental' soldier, fezzed, mustachioed, swarthy, leisurely and semi-dictatorial. When her laughter expanded into a sincere belly laugh, Auntie Beyaz shot her a defiant look.

"And what're you laughing at? What difference does it make if he were a *pasha* or a general? The important thing is whether he was a good commander, my girl!" (pp. 162-163)

In the wake of that, the old woman once again resumes the grave subject of the lost Norfolks to argue insightfully that their story will never fall into oblivion:

[I]f those soldiers had died in battle, instead of going off and vanishing, nobody would have worried their heads, *mari*! They would have become

¹⁶ "*Mari*: a colloquial word used around Chanakkale to address any person" (Uzuner, 2002, p. 9, footnote*).

¹⁷ "*Hanim*: Miss (after a person's name)" (Uzuner, 2002, p. 23, footnote*).

¹⁸ "*Pasha*: high rank officer" (Uzuner, 2002, p. 20, footnote*).

heroes. But the fact is these soldiers are still missing and, how do you say, a soul can't rest until he is found dead or alive. (p. 163)

And as long as the soldiers' souls cannot rest, the alive, most probably in both literature and the reality it imitates, will not find peace, either. Friends and relatives of the absent ones – if not Vicki whose Anzac great-grandfather turns out to be Auntie Beyaz's “Ottoman” father in the denouement of the mystery in the novel – will always be haunted, in David Read Johnson's (2010) words,

by shadows of things not present but which cannot be buried or laid to rest. This disquieting absence is implied in a number of expressions: [...] ‘the hollow men’ ... ‘the black hole of trauma.’ It is memory that refuses its status as memory; that seeks to rise up, to come alive again; that calls out to be found; that is missing. (pp. 57-58)

Prima facie, the soldiers, in and outside literature, will have a strong grip on the remaining ones' memory and, with all their might, conquer minds, if not Gallipoli. Those left behind will be impacted by the anguish of losing their loved ones. They will long to see the ones who are not there anymore, fictionalise or romanticise them, and think about what they might have lived with them. To aggravate these thoughts and feelings, the soldiers' whereabouts will linger on as a puzzle craving to be completed. Friends and family, extending to the later generations, left with a partial or incomplete reality will yearn to see the whole picture. For them, finding out what happened at Gallipoli will continue as a task to fulfil, and failing to do so, a source of frustration, to say the least.

The Gallipoli event now looks a myth inseparable from the literary ecology, as well as the collective (environmental) memory, of both the Allied and Turkish sides. To skim the surface of the “vanished battalion” as a myth, like scores of other myths, this one, too, has a story beginning with a quest (the quest for Istanbul), involving a journey (the journey of thousands to Gallipoli), and the trials of a battle. It explains a historical event traced back to a non-specific day (12/21/25/28 August 1915) around a natural phenomenon (a cloud, be it opaque grey or a white puff) as well as divine intervention or the supernatural. It all the more hints at a metamorphosis (the Norfolks in a sense shapeshift into a cloud or the particles of a cloud) and sets forth heroism or superhuman courage (the battalion enters the cloud without wavering) through vivid descriptions of the “characters” and the setting alike.

The disappearance of the Fifth Norfolks entailing a cloud can, or rather, should be explored from an ecologically scientific point of view as well, which would be compatible with the zeitgeist of those years, too. After all, as Katharine Anderson (2005) quotes from the philosopher of science Karl Popper (1902-1994), the Victorians believed that “All clouds [were] clocks” (p. 13), and the meteorologists of the time aspired to “unlock the mechanism of the weather” (Anderson, 2005, p. 14) with their cloud cameras, maps, and charts, etc., alongside the data provided by farmers, shepherds, and sailors' “weather wisdom” (Anderson, 2005, pp. 11, 182).

Such a scientific modus operandi would be very much in agreement with the Ottoman world view, too, because, as Shaik Kadir (2007) expresses it, the Qur'an emphasises reason, endorses science, and “encourag[es] people to use their mind in their daily activities” (p. 109). It “makes frequent references to the natural phenomena of the universe as incentives for scientific investigations and research” (Shaik Kadir, 2007, p. 109). The Sura *An-Nur*, “The Light,” including verses which consider the Supra-physical

in relation to the physical or material universe, for instance, evidences that science or an investigation of the scientific status of the material world is not out of the contours of Islam. Part of the Sura best exemplifying this reads: “Do you not see that God gently drives the clouds, then joins them together, then piles them up, then you see rain coming forth from their midst? [...]. God turns the day and the night over; verily there is a lesson in that for those endowed with insight” (24:43-44).

So, scientifically speaking, the Gallipoli cloud was probably a low-level cloud,¹⁹ a stratocumulus, to use the term Luke Howard (1772-1864), a pharmacist and amateur meteorologist from London, coined 150 years ago together with numerous other terms in his *Essay on the Modifications of Clouds* (1803) (Mason, 1975, pp. 1, 2; Anderson, 2005, p. 182) to classify clouds, “follow[ing], by one year, the famous French scientist J. B. Lamarck [1744-1829], who also had devised a classification scheme” (Battan, 2003, p. 40). Yet a stratocumulus – caused either by air currents (It is said that there was a strong breeze when the battalion disappeared), or heat, evaporation, and evapotranspiration,²⁰ or the particles of dust, microscopic or not, raised by the weapons with the potential to act as condensation nuclei around which water droplets could form – would be too high in the troposphere²¹ to swallow the Norfolks like vapour or tiny drops. Perhaps only because of what may be termed a “cloud illusion,” the stratocumulus, if any, could appear to be close enough to the ground to carry away the soldiers. It is much more likely or even certain that the Gallipoli cloud was a “very low cloud” such as fog²² which, Vincent Guidard and Diane Tzanos (2007) state, “may occur under low cloud” (p. 1210), calling up the soldiers’ descriptions of the “six or eight” clouds in layers over one another. Chances are that it was radiation fog, aka ground fog, which, L. L. Downing (2013) writes, “occurs after sunrise” (p. 56) as a result of the breeze cooling the surface of the earth.

Nevertheless, an ecologically scientific approach of this kind sounds limited to interpret the witnesses’ accounts because fog, for them, signified much more than H₂O, or a mass of droplets floating low in the sky and covering the ground like a permeable canopy to be perceived by the visual modalities only. In fact, fog, as a filtering medium reducing the intensity of light, creates a luminal space. According to Marzena Sokołowska-Paryż (2015), it “obscur[es] the distinction between absence and presence, visibility and invisibility, the knowable and unknowable” (p. 121). As if to illustrate this assertion, the way the Gallipoli soldiers in the haze of pain and their successors made sense of fog is rather supernatural which excludes exclusively material explanations such as those provided by ecocriticism. While ecocriticism, with its overwhelmingly monistic standpoint identical with that of the natural sciences it benefits from or shares with, adheres to a priori phenomena and marginalises the supernatural, the soldiers looking up at the Gallipoli cloud did not see a clock but a sign of God – be He a personal, anthropocentric One or the same as the totality of nature, an immanent deity, whether or not divine. As opposed to the physicalist ecocritical approach which downplays or rather negates “the weird,” “the uncanny,” and pushes the nonphysical to the periphery, the British, in that episode of the Gallipoli campaign, held that the battalion was saved from the hell of war by divine agency. From their perspective, the supernatural element they attributed to nature helped the Norfolks at a moment of downright danger, a spiritual way of

¹⁹ A cloud with a height of less than 7000 ft (Mason, 1975, p. 2).

²⁰ The combined processes of evaporation, viz. water vapour coming from the land, and transpiration, from plants or leaf surfaces (Brown & Brown, 2014, p. 9; Clapham, 2004, p.5).

²¹ The lowest atmospheric layer with an elevation of 7-17 kilometres from the surface of the earth (Gibson, 2011, p. 44).

²² Fog reaches up to 600 ft above terrain (Downing, 2013, p. 54).

interpreting things the Turks, too, adopted, though maintaining that God was on their own side.

Conclusion

The myth of the battalion that was, by report, lifted from the ground to drop out of sight in the low-slung cloud at Gallipoli is, together with the spiritual meanings ascribed to it, evocative of the conception of Unity in Ontological Pantheism, which, according to Paul Harrison (2004), professes that all things are interrelated (p. 2), that “there is only one fundamental substance” (Harrison, 2004, p. 84), “a single entity” (Levine, 1994, p. 37) or “an all-inclusive divine Unity” (Levine, 1994, p. 36) which does not allow any distinction between the natural and the supernatural (Levine, 1994, p. 39). However, paradoxically enough, this monistic essence that makes nature and the sacred not only inextricable but also one and the same, introduces a kind of duality to an ecocritical analysis of the story about the hard-to-comprehend Gallipoli event and necessitates interpreting it with a cross-disciplinary approach, between science and belief, like “Clouds do not swallow men, the case of ‘the battalion that vanished’ excepted.” Finally, the relevant soldiers’ accounts and the succeeding derivative narratives highlight the metaphysical dimension of the ecologically mysterious event, drawing attention to the likelihood that the natural and the supernatural may segue into and complement each other – at least in the onlooker’s conscious or subconscious mind – and that material nature may be a coded indication of the Divine, or the Divine may manifest Himself through material nature, a course perhaps conceivable to consider a revamped version of ecocriticism and call “pantheistic ecocriticism.”

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