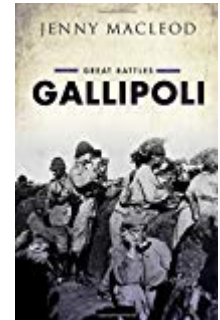


Jenny MacLeod. *Gallipoli*. Great Battles Series. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015. 256 pp. \$29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-19-964487-2.



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For centuries, both wars and the history of wars have revolved around “great battles”: conflicts which pit two armies against each other in a climactic clash that, though relatively short, is decisive to the war as a whole. Names such as Waterloo, Gettysburg, Gaugamela, or Ia Drang come to mind. Great battles can alter the trajectory of a war, or even of a nation. They can also create powerful cultural narratives that may live on long after the end of the war, and even sometimes outstrip the purely military importance of the battle; America’s Battle of New Orleans is a classic example of a battle whose importance is almost solely symbolic. It is this combination of practical importance and cultural impact that the Great Battles series, steeped in both military history and history of memory, seeks to examine, and Jenny MacLeod’s examination of the Gallipoli campaign and Anzac Day is a worthy addition to the series. [1]

MacLeod’s stated goal is an ambitious one, particularly in so short a book: “to present the most fully transnational examination of the cam-

paign and its memory that has been written to date” (pp. 6-7). In particular, her aim is to examine the myth, memory, commemoration, and use over time of the Gallipoli campaign in five different countries: Australia, New Zealand, Ireland, England, and Turkey. Possible in part because of the increased availability of Ottoman/Turkish sources (previously accessed only with great difficulty, or even entirely inaccessible), this methodology gives *Gallipoli* a balance and depth sometimes lacking in works of military history, and allows the reader an extraordinary and very readable view of the Gallipoli campaign from not one perspective, or even two, but five.

The first three main chapters of *Gallipoli*, along with a set of useful maps, comprise an extended narrative of the campaign itself. This portion of the book alone makes it of value; a reader entirely unfamiliar with the Gallipoli campaign will finish these chapters with a good working understanding of its events, its background, and its context. MacLeod utilizes both primary and secondary sources to build a picture of the reasons

for the battle, its planning and strategies, its major engagements over the course of several months, and its outcome. Although this portion of the book is primarily narrative, MacLeod does draw some conclusions. First, she lays the blame for the campaign's disastrous outcome squarely upon the cumbersome, excessively political, and disorganized British War Council, and more particularly upon the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill. She asserts that the War Council planned the operation very poorly: "mission creep" and "half-baked planning" are used as descriptors (p. 17). However, she also argues that the Ottoman forces did not win simply by default; they were, she states, much better organized, better trained, and better led, and their logistics were far superior to those of their attackers (for example, the Ottoman soldiers suffered far less from disease and lack of water). In short, according to MacLeod, the Ottomans did not simply hold on long enough to avoid losing; they actively won, and Turkey's later pride in the battle was entirely justified.

The following four chapters deal with the different legacies of Gallipoli: its commemoration in Australia, New Zealand, England and Ireland, and Turkey. Here, MacLeod utilizes a creative variety of sources: newspapers, speeches, physical war memorials, films and plays, attendance numbers at commemorative events, and more, allowing her to access developing public perception and usage of the events.

Appropriately, in this portion of the book Australia is dealt with first; more than once, MacLeod characterizes Anzac Day, and its characteristic "dawn service," as "Australia's greatest export" (p. 116, for example), and in no other country examined did the Gallipoli campaign have such a pivotal role in nation-building and the creation of identity. According to MacLeod, immediately after the campaign and during the war, the role of the Anzacs at Gallipoli was portrayed as both uniquely Australian and proudly British (something

which, she asserts, was not only possible within the British Empire at this time, but usual). Heroic descriptions of the campaign, penned by dedicated and skilled war correspondents, portrayed the Australian Anzacs as exemplary of a unique Australian character: strong, fearless, independent, loyal, and indomitable. This perception, which came to be known as the Anzac Legend, became (unsurprisingly) a tremendous point of pride for Australians, and according to MacLeod, continued to shape Australian identity through the following century, while adjusting and adapting to the times. The focus on empire waned, while an emphasis on antimilitarization and multiculturalism grew, but the Anzac Legend endured, and continues to endure.

Next, MacLeod describes the legacy of Gallipoli in other places. New Zealand, she asserts, adopted the idea of Anzac Day commemorations from the Australians. However, the New Zealand version of Anzac Day took a different trajectory. Instead of Australia's proud assertion of uniqueness, the New Zealanders preferred to frame their narrative in terms of their role in the British Empire; later, after the British Empire was no longer welcome in the narrative, this emphasis on the larger world and New Zealand's place in it would remain. In addition, New Zealand's observations (at least in the beginning) tended to be far more solemn, even grim, than Australia's.

In England and Ireland, which MacLeod examines in the next chapter, there was considerably less desire to remember Gallipoli at all. In the case of England, the fault for the campaign's failure was primarily theirs, a problem none of the other nations had to deal with (indeed, anti-British sentiment cropped up in some post-empire Australian, New Zealand, and especially Irish treatments of the campaign, and was used to reinforce solidarity by contrast to the Other). Consequently, the English narrative of Gallipoli emphasized the doomed heroism of their soldiers, and the validity of the basic idea of the campaign, its

actual outcome notwithstanding; a comparison might be drawn to some defenses of the Vietnam War in America more recently. English writers also focused on the mythic, heroic, or classical setting of the campaign: the Dardanelles (known in antiquity as the Hellespont), the proximity of Troy and Thermopylae, and so on. This, according to MacLeod, made a defeat more endurable, or more comprehensible; England was, however, still not interested in any large-scale commemoration of it, and so any commemoration that occurred tended to be small, local, often informal, and (interestingly) frequently tied to Anzac Day. Meanwhile, MacLeod notes, Ireland was in the process of fighting for its independence from England, and once independence was obtained, any commemoration of Gallipoli (or even World War I in general) was a reminder of English rule, and therefore unacceptable. Anzac Day celebrations—so long as they were tied to Australia or New Zealand, not to England—took place, but as in England, these tended to be small and local. Only in recent years, as relations with England improved, have the Irish desired to commemorate their role in World War II and Gallipoli.

Finally, MacLeod describes the legacy of Gallipoli in Turkey, as the new Turkish Republic sought to reinvent itself. This chapter, though one of the most unique and important in the book, is also one of the more difficult. Largely because of the complicated political events (for example, multiple coups and governmental turnover, as well as the suppression or destruction of undesirable records) in Turkey over the last century, tracing the legacy of Gallipoli there is considerably less straightforward, and the clarity of the chapter suffers somewhat, though perhaps unavoidably. Not only is Gallipoli examined, but MacLeod also brings into the story the veneration of Mustafa Kemal, or Atatürk, as a Turkish founding father, as well as the Armenian genocide (an event which was more or less contemporary with Gallipoli, and which MacLeod argues is important for understanding the Ottoman role in it). According to

MacLeod, Turkey's memory of the campaign had to be particularly flexible and adaptable, as it was used to bolster several very different regimes and narratives.

In *Gallipoli*, Jenny MacLeod takes on a complex and difficult task: not only to describe the events of the Gallipoli campaign itself, but to explore five very different (and constantly changing) legacies or memories of those events. Despite this complexity, *Gallipoli* is a remarkably clear, readable work, and one which would be invaluable not only to a historian of memory or of World War I, but also to professors seeking an excellent study of the history of memory to assign to graduate students, or indeed to any person who desires to understand this “great battle” in its complexity and its immense importance.

Note

[1]. ANZAC is an acronym for “Australian and New Zealand Army Corps.” The men called themselves “Anzacs”; the area they held on the Gallipoli Peninsula came to be called “Anzac” as well, and they called their landing site “Anzac Cove.” The holiday commemorating Gallipoli was named Anzac Day.

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