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# **Once More, With Feeling:**

An enquiry into The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa's  
exhibition *Gallipoli: The scale of our war*

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## Abstract

This thesis examines The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa's exhibition *Gallipoli: The scale of our war*. Conceived in partnership with Weta Workshop and formulated during a period of institutional uncertainty, *Gallipoli* was ostensibly created to commemorate the centenary of the First World War. This research investigates what this exhibition and the methodologies and practices deployed in its development reveals about how Te Papa interprets its public service role, and concludes that *Gallipoli* signals an intensification of its hegemonic function.

Marked by a discursive engagement with critical museology and theoretical perspectives pertaining to the ethics of memorialisation and practices of governmentality, in this thesis a transdisciplinary approach is adopted. Employing a qualitative and grounded theory methodology and inductive processes, anchoring the research are interviews with Te Papa staff and *Gallipoli* visitors, documentary evidence, exhibition 'text' analysis and autoethnographic reflections.

This thesis suggests that *Gallipoli* is characterised by a distinctive 'affective public pedagogy'. Further to this, it is argued that *Gallipoli* not only has significant implications for Te Papa's pedagogical functions, but also for conceptions of subjectivity, citizenship and nationhood in New Zealand in the twenty-first century. It is contended that recent developments at Te Papa have further problematized its exogenous and endogenous relations of power, and that the ritualised practices of affect afforded by *Gallipoli* are ideologically prescribed. It is also determined that Te Papa's legislative responsibility to be a 'forum for the nation' requires reconsidering.



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# Contents

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Contents	vii
List of illustrations	xi
Prologue – Encountering <i>Gallipoli</i>	xiii
<b>Introduction – Once More</b>	<b>1</b>
Introduction	1
Background	5
Museums, Pedagogy and Affect	7
Objectives	9
Theoretical Framework	10
Research Ethics	10
Methodology	11
Research Methods	12
Data collection	12
Documents	12
Interview participants and recruitment	12
Interviews	13
Visitor observations	13
Autoethnography	14
Data analysis	14
Limitations	14
Outline of Thesis	15
<b>Chapter One – The Past Is No Longer Another Country</b>	<b>17</b>
Prelude – It could be otherwise	17
Introduction	17



<b>I</b>	Old Museums, New Museums, Post Museums	19
	Moralising, optimistic: old museums	19
	Future tense: the arrival of the new museology	21
	Past tense: the departure of the new museology?	25
<b>II</b>	Memory, Trauma And The Museum	27
	Memory and victimhood	27
	Memorialisation and the museum	29
<b>III</b>	Commemorating The First World War	31
	Summary	35
 <b>Chapter Two – An Emotional Journey: Te Papa and The Making of <i>Gallipoli</i></b>		 <b>37</b>
	Prelude - Argonaut/argonaut	37
	Introduction	38
<b>I</b>	Te Papa Tongarewa 1998 – 2016	38
<b>II</b>	Te Papa’s First World War	44
	Introducing <i>Gallipoli</i>	44
	Aspirant, circuitous: the development of an exhibition	45
	Outside-in: Weta Workshop takes control	49
	Our story: exhibition objectives	51
	The exhibition actualised	55
	Summary	58
 <b>Chapter Three – Queuing For <i>Gallipoli</i>: Public Pedagogy and Visitor Reception</b>		 <b>59</b>
	Prelude – Being affected	59
	Introduction	60
<b>I</b>	Pedagogy In And Out Of The Museum	60
	Corporate public pedagogy	60
	Museological pedagogy	62
<b>II</b>	Visitors	66
	Welcome	66
	How did it make you feel?	67

	Never shall I forget the grandeur of the scene	68
	What good we are doing I cannot say	70
	For an hour or so matters were very lively	71
	I also did not reign long	72
	Some trick of the mind	75
	We became unspeakably weary	76
	Summary	78
<b>Chapter Four – The Sacred Real: Analysis</b>		<b>79</b>
	Prelude – Out of reach but touching	79
	Introduction	80
<b>I</b>	Reading It	81
	We were in Egypt	81
	Like a labyrinth	83
	Larger than life	86
<b>II</b>	Feeling It	87
<b>III</b>	Selling It, Making It – What Wags What	89
<b>IV</b>	Reading It Again	91
	Bottom-up	91
	Difficult <i>and</i> lovely	93
	Making it real	94
	<i>Gallipoli's</i> enigmas	95
	Summary	97
<b>Chapter Five – Lest We Forget: Discussion and Conclusion</b>		<b>101</b>
	Prelude – Paper poppies	101
	Introduction	102
<b>I</b>	Affective Public Pedagogy In The Museum	104
	You must feel, you will remember	104
	To be moved (through) and to feel witness:	
	<i>Gallipoli's</i> subjects	107
<b>II</b>	Te Papa Now	111
	The vanishing pedagogue	111

	Changing hearts: Te Papa as forum <i>as</i> temple	113
<b>III</b>	States of Exception	117
	Nation, trauma, memorialisation	117
	Acts of suspension	119
<b>IV</b>	Conclusion – Shifting Scales	121
<b>References</b>		<b>127</b>
<b>Appendix</b>		<b>143</b>

## List of Illustrations

All images collection of the author unless otherwise stated.

1.1 Lieutenant Spencer Westmacott, 2015.	xiii
2.1 <i>Gallipoli's</i> Chunuk Bair mural, 2015.	33
3.1 Te Papa's entrance. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	38
3.2 <i>Gallipoli</i> map. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	44
3.3 Graphic pictogram. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	54
3.4 Private Rikihana Carkeek, Corporal Friday Hawkins and Private Colin Warden. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	58
4.1 Lieutenant Colonel Percival Fenwick. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	59
4.2 Queuing for <i>Gallipoli</i> , 2015.	67
4.3 Poppy Interactive instructions, 2015.	70
4.4 'Digging In', 2015.	74
5.1 Private Jack Dunn. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	79
5.2 'Out of Egypt', 2015.	82
5.3 'Exposed Wounds' and 'Have a Shot' interactives, 2015.	85
5.4 Kemal Atatürk, 2015.	98
6.1 Sergeant Cecil Malthus. Image courtesy Te Papa, 2015.	101
6.2 <i>Gallipoli</i> gift-store counter, 2015.	103
6.3 Graphic text, 2015.	106
6.4 <i>Gallipoli</i> merchandise, 2016.	116
6.5 Staff Nurse Lottie Le Gallais, 2015.	119



## PROLOGUE

### Encountering *Gallipoli*



Figure 1.1: Lieutenant Spencer Westmacott, 2015.

Wellington's harbour sits under a lowering sky. It's mid-morning in mid-winter and the sea is the colour of lead. In front of me, as if risen from the water – like some sort of space-age Atlantis – is the hulk of Te Papa Tongarewa.

I enter the Museum. Stepping from the escalator, I'm confronted by a hundred or so murmurous visitors stretched out in a snaking queue before the silhouette cut-out of a New Zealand soldier and beneath *Gallipoli: The scale of our war* spelled out in massive sans-serif font.

With a wave of ten or so others I step across *Gallipoli's* threshold and am immediately greeted by a giant khaki-clad figure, lying prone, and pointing a pistol over my head, a dramatic Hollywood score, sounds of battle and a voice proclaiming "Good boys. I felt a glow of pride". It almost feels carnivalesque, but I'm on guard, painfully conscious of 'what I'm doing here' and knowing full-well that the story has a tragic

ending. Within minutes, my ‘companions’ are increasingly hushed and I begin to feel the closeness of their bodies. Every time I look up I seem to catch someone’s eye. It’s oppressive, claustrophobic.

I’m propelled through the labyrinth, through the chronologically unfurling tale of New Zealand’s Gallipoli campaign. In each ‘bell-jar’ I am met by a giant or huddle of giants, and in each ‘annexe’ – which seem sepulchral but sci-fi – I find wall texts, touch-screen kiosks, photographs, military paraphernalia, videos: a cornucopia of dates, battles, deaths.

While certain that their suffering was real – the care with which each hyper-real giant has been fashioned confirms this – and while equally certain of what it was they suffered from – the text catalogues precisely the methods of death or ailment – I am given little insight into the bigger “why” of their suffering.

Part way through, I stop and take down a few hurried notes. When I looked over them later two stood out. The first read: why are they telling me *this*? And the second: why do they want me to *feel* like this?

An hour after entering, I descend down and around a horse-shoe basin holding one last giant figure in a sea of paper poppies strewn by visitors on their way out and exit through the gift-store.





