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**“Telling the New Zealand Story”:  
National Narratives in Three Long-Term  
Exhibitions at The Museum of New  
Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa.**

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requirements for the degree of

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## Abstract

This thesis is an examination of the national narratives contained in three exhibits in The Museum of New Zealand, Te Papa Tongarewa. It examines the existence of the state and the nation, and their involvement in museum development, and applies this theory, and selected theories of Roland Barthes, Sergei Eisenstein, and Walter Benjamin, to the subsequent analysis. Broadly, the position taken is that museums are one of a number of institutions that perpetuate national narratives in order to bind nations together and discourage anti-state sentiment, and this position is validated in the analysis of three long-term Te Papa exhibits, *Exhibiting Ourselves*, *Parade*, and *Golden Days*.

“The national collection is very very strong...in telling the New Zealand story...”

Cheryll Sotheran, Te Papa CEO, quoted in Rudman, 1996b.

“Te Papa is only a straw in the cultural wind.”

Theodor Dalrymple, British critic, 1999.

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## Glossary

Aotearoa	The whole of New Zealand.
Hapu	Subtribe.
Harakeke	Flax leaf, <i>Phormium tenax</i> .
Hui	Gathering, meeting.
Huia	A bird, native to New Zealand, now extinct.
Iwi	Tribe, people, nation.
Kapa haka	Kapa: procession, team. Haka: fierce rythmical dance.
Kauri	A tree, <i>Agathis australis</i>
Kete	A bag or basket made of woven fibre, usually harakeke.
Kia ora	Hello! Thanks! May you have health.
Kiwi	An indigenous bird, often cited as New Zealand's national bird, <i>Apteryx</i> .
Kohanga Reo	Language nest, Maori language preschool.
Korowai	Tag cloak (chiefly).
Koru	Apostrophe, spiral pattern, intestinal.
Mamaku	Black tree fern, <i>Cyathea medullaris</i>
Mere	Short flat club.
Nikau	Palm, <i>Rhopalostylis sapida</i> .
Pa	Stockaded villlage.
Papatuanuku	Mother Earth.
Patu Onewa	Hand club
Pounamu	Greenstone.
Rimu	Red pine, <i>Dacrydium cupressinum</i> .
Te Papa Tongarewa	Container of treasures, also "Our Place".

Tangata Wheuna	Maori (literally: the people of the land)
Tangata Tiriti	Settlers to New Zealand, the people who live in New Zealand as a result of the Treaty of Waitangi (literally: the people of the Treaty)
Tangihanga	Mourning.
Taonga	Treasure, that which is treasured
Tikanga	Custom, obligations and conditions.
Tiki	Neck pendant.
Waka	Canoe.

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