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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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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.

