within discussions of the development of Australian television, radio and theatre. The unfortunate costs of this approach are that the women’s stories are sometimes swamped by details of government funding, theatre companies and playwriting competitions, and that facts about the individual dramatists are often repeated to remind a reader distracted by the other minutiae.

Arrow chose to present her work in this way because she wanted to reverse a trend in other histories of Australian drama that omit women dramatists. Yet Arrow’s explanation of her opposition to those histories is unhelpful. Arrow claims that theatre historians mostly focus on Louis Esson and the Pioneer Players, *The Doll*, and the New Wave of the late 1960s because they tell a ‘nationalist story of Australian theatre’(12-13). She dismisses the inquiry into nationalist Australian drama altogether simply for the reason that historians pursuing that question have not referred to the work of female playwrights. Her argument would have been much stronger if instead she had showed how women’s plays also contributed to the development of a national Australian theatre dealing with nationalist issues.

Arrow also inaccurately states that this ‘nationalist story of Australian theatre’ ignores ‘a theatrical tradition highly critical of Australian social and political life’(13). In fact, women playwrights were not alone in producing drama that was critical of Australian society, the histories that Arrow castigates document such plays, and that drama was deemed to be nationalist. The prime examples of this drama are the plays of the male New Wave dramatists that, as Arrow observes, are frequently discussed.

Despite these problems, *Upstaged* is an interesting, valuable and original account of Australian women dramatists and the roles that they played in developing Australian stage, television and radio drama.

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How did Enlightenment thought of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries play itself out in colonial Australia? John Gascoigne’s *The Enlightenment and the Origins of European Australia* explores this intriguing theme.

Such a focus on Australia’s early colonies, at times tenuous edges of empire, in terms of Empire’s developing powerhouse, the Enlightenment and its ideas of progress, is rare. However, for some time now historians in Britain’s former colonies have been doing this, leading to reassessment of empire on the ground to reveal its operation in the colonies. Unlike David Armatige’s recently published *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), which while thoroughgoing does not test imperial ideology by analysing
empire’s effects in its own colonies, Gascoigne’s book has a highly applied charter: his central interest is the social and political development of colonial Australia as shaped through eighteenth-century impulses of the mainly English-speaking Enlightenment. These powerful ideas, the author contends, took a particularly strong hold in Australia especially in the areas of criminality and penal reform, education, agriculture, and in regard to Aboriginal peoples.

Gascoigne has interpreted colonial Australia’s early development in refreshing ways by illuminating its social and political construction in terms of British Enlightenment discourse. Instead of tired, cannulated, and sometimes deterministic categories of enquiry, such as ‘governors’, ‘convicts’, ‘Aborigines’, ‘the colonial office’, and perhaps if we are lucky ‘women’, Gascoigne’s purview is multi-focused and more generous. Enlightenment principles are shown to manifest through such seemingly disparate spheres such as architecture and agriculture. This continuum of Enlightenment belief is, in turn, set against the broader backdrop of key events in European history which restructured society: the American and French Revolutions, the Industrial Revolution and the Chartist movement in Britain.

Gascoigne’s contention that there were many Enlightenments is compelling. Amongst these many Enlightenments, ‘reflecting different places and different phases of the century’, Australia was just one, with its own particular and localised contingencies. Gascoigne’s aim is to explore how early colonial Australia in all its specificities was created by Enlightenment intellectual endeavour. The first part of his book is a survey of the religious and political character of the colonial society, in the main the NSW colony and the later colony of Van Diemen’s Land, to see how far it provided ‘fruitful soil for the cultivation of Enlightenment values’. Part two examines the vigorous Enlightenment tenet of improvement, revealing how this was manifested in attitudes to, and debates about, the improvement of the land through agriculture and science, and the improvement of human nature through education, the penal system, and effort to ‘improve’ and civilise Indigenous society.

Gascoigne notes historian Manning Clark’s sparse acknowledgement of the role of Enlightenment thought in the shaping of Australia’s early colonies, and believes that Clark inaccurately set the influence of the Enlightenment in opposition to that of the church. Instead, Gascoigne identifies the Australian tendency for Christianity and Enlightenment thinking to coalesce through the force of Evangelicalism, ‘a dynamic form of Christianity which shaped early colonial Australia’. He compellingly and instructively traces the conflicts and consonances in Australia between Christian and Enlightenment ideals.

The book also traces the countervailing tensions in the legal and political transformation of the colony from what was essentially an open air gaol to a civil society. For example, military-based government was gradually exchanged for customary and free government, and the campaign for the establishment of colonial legislature and juries was driven by Enlightenment principles that called for representation, even in the colonies. Gascoigne’s detailed treatment of the penal education
systems is an excellent resource. In sum, Gascoigne argues that a more moderate or conservative form of Enlightenment thinking shaped the colony of NSW compared to the tumultuous changes to be found in Europe. The new settler society was viewed almost as a clean slate on which to confer civilising Enlightenment values without the conflicts and resistances of the Old World. Both ‘Australia and the United States were to act as agents of Enlightenment in its British and particularly English guise – one that took a more moderate form than the more adversarial and therefore more conspicuous French Enlightenment’. Australia, seeing itself as new and forward-looking, was less in thrall to the established and powerful institutions of the aristocracy and the church. Religion ultimately ‘retreated more and more to the private sphere’, and ‘even nationalism took a very muted form in Australia complicated as it was by twin loyalties to Australia and the British Crown’. Ultimately, convict reform and improvement gave way to ideas of deterrence. So too, the confident and sometimes totalising Enlightenment aspirations to re-fashion the land and Indigenous peoples were confounded, and the limits of British colonial discourse were severely tested. It was, notes Gascoigne, the Benthamite Utilitarian current of Enlightenment thought, with its tenet of the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people, that prevailed in Australia, surpassing the discourse on individual political rights.

Clearly outside the scope of this work, but tantalising in its absence, is some treatment of the idea of Enlightenment ideas transforming in the Australian colonies and their cyclical return to influence Empire. What usually emerges in such a study is the extent to which Empire and its colonies, the periphery and the metropol, indeed co-produce each other. Gascoigne hints at this in several ways but never really gives serious attention to this crucial phenomenon, though admittedly he would need at least another volume to tell the story.

This is a wide ranging, lucidly written book, and I recommend it highly to scholars of Australian history who wish to move beyond the fixed categories of scholarship that reduplicate themselves with annoying pervasiveness in Australian historiography, to find a serious analysis of their own society through the lens of Enlightenment thought.

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This is an excellent book to read in bed. It is also an excellent book to read on the train, on the tram or on the bus. Kerry Howe has taken on an ambitious project, and succeeded: he has aimed both to cover an extended and intricate topic (how cultural narratives of the settlement of the Pacific relate to the societies that craft them) and to make that account available