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.

PENELOPE EDMONDS
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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
and attractive to a non-specialist reader. Howe has aimed this book at a popular audience and it is relentlessly accessible and engaging, as well as standard paperback size.

Howe reveals the scope of his project early by analysing the question, of the origins and actions of pre-historic Polynesians, posed in his title:

It is as revealing of the preoccupations of its creators as it is of its ostensible subject. Indeed the question, or rather the imperative continually to pose it, is as important as any answer. This is because the issue has been driven by far more than idle or antiquarian curiosity, or even an interest in Islanders per se. What the question and answers reveal are profound Western cultural concerns involving such heady issues as identities (of self and others), imperial and racial destinies, political and intellectual appropriations, and environmental worries. Investigating Islanders’ origins has essentially been a means of inquiring into the West’s own past, present and future(9).

Howe’s task is large, and he sets a cracking pace. Any author who can dispose of Edward Said’s Orientalism, by trumping it with Bernard Smith’s European Vision and the South Pacific, within one paragraph is an author moving swiftly and surely over difficult ground(17).

Howe produced this book in a deliberate, public attempt to answer the proponents of what could be called New Zealand non-history. The project was a necessary one: pakeha myths have proved difficult to dispel (only last week I was informed by a well-educated Australian that New Zealand was first settled by the Moriori, who were violently evicted by the Maori). Howe argues that ‘new’ learning about the Pacific has its origins in nineteenth century mainstream ideas about race and development and he solidly weighs the evidence both for and against such theories. The analysis and refutation of nineteenth century myth-making motivated by assumptions of racial hierarchy and European superiority is not new, but Howe’s re-presentation of this material is undoubtedly necessary. He has aimed his presentation at mainstream New Zealand where the myths still clamour for attention more loudly than their critics(161).

It is a difficult project to synthesise the history of ideas about Pacific origins, an account of the current scientific thinking on Pacific settlement and an analysis of non-scientific, evidence-light theories. Howe’s argument that the ‘new’ learning is based on nineteenth century fallacies requires both an account of those fallacies and an account of the evidence that refutes them, but it is in the sections on current theories that Howe’s writing really comes alive. He has amassed superb material – lost continents revealed by stone lions mouthing ‘Mu’ at Angkor Thom(151), Polynesians voyaging on continents shifted by polar tilt (154) – and his treatment of it is original, scholarly and necessary, as well as entertaining.

Despite the deliberate lightness of this book – both in tone and in its actual, physical manifestation – Howe carefully constructs an important argument, one with wide-ranging implications. He guides the reader through a detailed analysis of the answers posited to the question ‘Who first discovered and settled New Zealand and the Pacific Islands?’; he
firmly links twentieth century quackery with nineteenth century racial theory; and he makes the wide acceptance of such ideas uncomfortable rather than merely amusing. He concludes that the ‘new’ learning needs to be actively confronted because it hides ‘imperial and colonialist values and assumptions about race, gender and culture’, because it amounts to ‘dangerous anti-intellectualism’ with disturbing implications for any process of reconciliation in post-colonial societies and because it is a form of colonialist appropriation of cultures and traditions – a claim to understand Polynesian and Maori traditions and histories better than traditional or academic custodians(156-8).

This is a wonderful book; it should not have needed to be written. Howe’s willingness to engage with public debate is commendable, and this book is a shining example of the potential of reasoned historical argument in a popular context. His retention of the scholarly apparatus of endnotes and bibliography allows this book to take a place on scholarly bookshelves as well as bedside tables.

CLAIRE BRENNAN
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Joy Damousi could never have imagined the context in which most will read her study of Australian war widows, Living with the Aftermath. This reviewer read the bulk of the book at a bleak, security-heavy JFK Airport a month after what is known, at time of writing, simply as September 11. This followed a three-week period travelling through a United States that was, once again, desperately whipping itself into a war – though this time merely a rather unfocused ‘war against terrorism’ successfully rescuing an ineffectual and hitherto unpopular President from obscurity.

Even at a time when war is once again at the forefront of the popular consciousness – albeit the latest style of war, with limited human combatants – Living with the Aftermath is in itself an unsatisfying book. Perhaps this is so simply because it deals with an unsatisfactory condition. Previous decades’ war widows have had to contend – often in the context of general social upheaval – with unsympathetic government and military bureaucracy. At the same time, national sentiment counters their attempts to confront the past with a strongly-held broad desire to move on while remaking dead soldiers into the glorious fallen. War widows are, to some extent, defined by themselves and others in relation to a particular tragic moment in time, yet they, like the rest of society, are a part of the process of redefining that time and making (or at least trying to make) it normal, understandable and perhaps even a benign part of history.

Drawing on a wide range of interviews, Damousi tracks the relation between the widows and public opinion – for instance, widows’ attitudes