While Hammer clearly does not write for those uninitiated in Elizabethan politics, his book gives an interpretation of the court political scene which takes into account the values and ideologies of political players as well as the personal practicalities and limitations imposed on their power. Hammer aims at a wider audience than the political court historian and hits his mark.

ANDREA CAST
University of Adelaide


The opposing metaphors in the title and subtitle of this book point to its central message. The instability of notions of ‘foundation’ in the histories of Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand; the ‘unsettlement caused by settlement;’ and the uncertainty of national identity are the themes which recur through the twelve essays in this collection, essays which are otherwise quite diverse. The metaphor is reiterated by Greg Dening who, in the poetic ‘prologue’ which introduces the book, writes ‘When the sands of time run freely, when even the firmest looking surface turns to water, foundational histories need to float – bound together’ (p. xi). The editors of Quicksands have taken this on, collecting works from scholars in a variety of disciplines, works which display multiple approaches to the broad topic and which suggest the fluidity of it, and binding them together in the same volume. It is an endeavour which is on the whole successful.

The book is divided into four parts. The first of these, Memories of Pasts to Come, is the most impressive. It opens with Deborah Bird Rose’s ‘Hardtimes: An Australian Study’. Rose takes as her starting point a hunting trip she experienced with Aborigines on the Victoria River, and from there ranges through ideas about the different temporal and spatial concepts employed by Aborigines and white colonisers; the nature of ‘frontier’ as experienced by both groups; the violence of conquest; and the incidents of co-existence, in such a way that collapses the distinctions between the past and the ‘now’. Stephen Turner’s piece, ‘Settlement as Forgetting’, suffers from being cut down from a longer work – there are too many strands within it that do not get adequately explored – but it, too, emphasises how the past is part of the present, living on with strong political implications. These concerns are also evident in Ross Gibson’s essay on colonial narratives of North Queensland, and Paul Carter’s study of the establishment of the Museum of Sydney on the site of the first Government house.
Different sources are used by each, including oral history by Rose, photography by Gibson, the site itself by Carter; yet all manage to draw out of their material a sense of the complexity of remembering and interpreting the meanings of cultural encounters, and a challenge to historical narratives that suggest linear progress.

Settler Baggage offers three essays which use more familiar historical and literary sources, yet still present differing and questioning perceptions of the nature of ‘foundation’. Jonathan Lamb explores the idea of utopia in nineteenth century writings about New Zealand; P. G. McHugh looks at narratives of constitutional foundation in both Australia and New Zealand; and Julian Thomas analyses the changing ways Australian historians have addressed the idea of ‘the start’ of Australian history. Engagement and interference with the landscape and nature are the thematic links between the essays in Myths of Nature. Nigel Clarke discusses the effects of the feral, drawing in part on contemporary artistic sources; John Morton and Nicholas Smith look at Australian eco-nationalism, including the complex cultural meanings surrounding the adoption or rejection of indigenous plant species in domestic gardens, and Geoff Park points to specific instances and ramifications of European intervention in, and appropriation of, New Zealand landscape.

The book is rounded off with The Work of Listening. In ‘A Spear in the Thigh for Senator Evans’ Tim Rowse analyses the debate over terminology in 1980s Australian political discussion of the treaty issue, and presents some interesting conclusions regarding semantics. Judith Binney’s ‘Songlines from Aotearoa’ explores how traditional forms of narrative and myth have been used by contemporary Maori for political ends. This final essay provides a nice symmetry with Rose’s opening piece, showing again how the culture of indigenous people is neither wiped out, nor embalmed as historical artefact, by the arrival of colonisers.

Collections of essays, even those built around a theme, can sometimes appear disparate and uneven. In contrast, the varied nature of the pieces in this volume, the diversity of sources used and the approaches taken, work to its advantage. That the individual authors have read and engaged with all the other contributions is made obvious, and their ability to refer to relevant sections of other works within the book is noteworthy and adds to the book’s overall coherence. This is not to say that all the essays are equally successful, or that gaps are not apparent. In particular, little consideration is given to gender; and although the essays are fairly evenly divided between focus on Australia and focus on New Zealand, there is little direct comparative work, which might have been valuable.

Overall, though, Quicksands offers an interesting and challenging selection of essays which generally stand up well on their own, but gain from being read in association with each other. It also offers a good introduction to the works of some notable scholars, invites you to explore their work further, and provides an indication


of the possibilities of history as a discipline, as well as the usefulness of a cross-cultural approach to the analysis of settler colonialism. Greg Dening, to return to his prologue, makes clear the unworkability of any concept of ‘zero point’ as the point of first cultural encounter between indigenous populations and invading colonisers. The contributors to the book show some of the ways that the idea of ‘foundation’ can be explored without resorting to such a concept.

ANN STANDISH
University of Melbourne

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With The Labour of Loss, Joy Damousi has made a very significant contribution to the growing study of mourning in wartime and postwar communities. Conscious of her position in the historical debate, Damousi diverges from works that examine responses to wartime grief through their public artefacts, and seeks to more fully understand individual grief and its gendered dimensions in two world wars. ‘In the transformation of a private individual memory to a public, collective one,’ she notes, ‘it is the specificity of individual grief which is lost’ (p. 128). Damousi shows how the bereaved tried to recapture the memory of their grief in public. It is an achievement of particular note that such a range of private records have been consulted in this book, which breaks new and important ground in the study of war, grief and memory.

The key theme of The Labour of Loss is the marginalisation of particular groups from public commemoration in Australia, and their subsequent attempts to assert a privileged place in Australian war memory. Loss bound people together during the war, but, as Damousi points out, ‘this was a fragile unity, for after the war, these groups tussled for the privileged status of primary bearer of memory and sacrifice’ (p. 25). Damousi deals with these groups in turn. Fathers of the dead, she suggests, could claim a legitimacy in commemoration by engaging with the masculine foundations of Anzac. However the notion of the ‘sacrificial mother’, which had so much currency during the war, was relegated to the periphery of public memory by the 1930s. War widows, while enduring the very real pain of losing husbands, were transformed into public reminders of their husbands’ sacrifice. Together with bereaved mothers, war widows found their specific loss and pain subsumed within the increasingly marginal and generic category of ‘woman’. This marginalisation, Damousi notes, was the result of these women ‘no longer [being] defined by their “sacrifice”’ (p. 36). Damousi deals also with the loss felt...