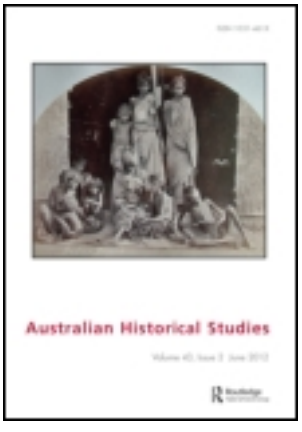

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26 Views of the Starburst World: William Dawes at Sydney Cove 1788-91

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past enables us to understand, indeed change, the present.

Structurally the book has interweaving threads of chronologically-selected stories, each with strong and varying visual modalities: photography through and beyond ethnography, photojournalism and activism is the core medium, but so too are a few feature films and docu-dramas that have forged new ways of representing both Aborigines and cross-cultural relations in Australia. Well-known stories—including frontier massacres; Patten and Ferguson's 1938 Day of Mourning campaign; Watt's 1946 movie *The Overlanders*; Perkins' Freedom Rides in the 1960s; the Tent Embassy of 1972; and the 2007+ Intervention policy in the NT—are re-examined through visual data used to mis/inform and engage wide audiences. These images, it emerges, are anything but fixed in time. For example, pre-World War I photographs of neck-chained prisoners triggered anti-slavery debates about frontier brutality (chapters two and three), prompted an embarrassing exposé of Australia before the UN in the 1950s (186ff.), and served as a symbol of pan-Aboriginal oppression in 1972 (235–5); today those same images 'bring those distant in space and time into the present' (61), as images of loved ones and ancestors are valued despite the violent accoutrements.

In the process of telling these complex stories of events and their aftermath, Lydon draws upon many historical and contemporary records as well as recent historiographies. Her nuanced writing deftly brings together fresh details and contested interpretations that ultimately provoke new insights—new flashes of recognition! However sometimes, as in chapter six on post-World War II activism, a coherent argument suffers from the inclusion of so many important issues.

Rather than arguing for the strengths and weaknesses of visual methodologies favoured by social scientists (fieldwork records, photo elicitation), photo historians (visual analysis), Indigenous researchers and participants (photo elicitation, memory and recovery), and creative photographers, Lydon cuts to the quick by declaring her interest in the 'testimonial' (25) image used in the mainstream media. The strategy is effective and valid. Yet for a history that sets store by the photographic image, the book as a whole seems to undervalue the visual: happenchance proximity of discussion and reproduced image replaces normal scholarly conventions that fully and clearly integrate image and argument by way of enumerated figures. As a result, the reader is never quite sure whether an image discussed is reproduced, and the lack of a List of Illustrations does not help. Furthermore, captions are inconsistently placed and curiously incomplete, with many ignoring authorship, date and/or source. Minuscule and faint additional data, including moral/cultural permissions, can just be detected along the binding edge. Perhaps the publisher was coy about Lydon's moral/cultural permissions, but the result is less than ideal. The minimal discussion on the materiality and contingency of photographs found in archives, newsprint, deluxe publications, activist posters and/or classy exhibitions works well for much of this history book, although artist photographers' exhibited works, considered in chapter seven, would have benefited from some attention to the hang and the curatorial purpose, since these also impact on audience reception.

Some curly issues, such as how to reconcile the claim that Aboriginal photographic practice centres upon co-authorship between image-maker and subject (262), with earlier accounts (236–41) documenting certain white photographers doing just that, remain unresolved. Nonetheless the book as a whole presents a strong and sustained ethical case for the 'need to shift attention from the image itself to our responsibilities as viewers' (283), making it a valuable addition to literatures on Australian history, Indigenous rights and visual history.

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26 Views of the Starburst World: William Dawes at Sydney Cove 1788–91.
By Ross Gibson. Perth: UWA Publishing, 2012. Pp. 304. A$29.95 paper.

Lieutenant William Dawes' two notebooks, which document his observations of the stars and the weather along with his lessons in the Eora language during the opening years of the British settlement at Sydney Cove, have received renewed interest in recent years. They

were known among specialist language and literary scholars since they came to notice in the collections of the University of London's School of Oriental and African Studies in the early 1970s. Linguist Jakelin Troy drew on them in her pioneering study of the Sydney language (1993), and they are a major source in Jeremy Steele's more recent research on the same subject. In 2008, Kate Grenville brought the journals and their author to the attention of a new audience when she published *The Lieutenant*, the second novel in her trilogy on black-white relations in the early years of the British colony. Ross Gibson has had a long interest in them. They are of a piece with equally intriguing texts from those early years, such as Thomas Watling's *Letters from an Exile at Botany-Bay* (1794), about which Gibson has also written.

This book lies somewhere between the conventional scholarly treatments and the fictional re-workings which the notebooks have so far received. It is not fiction. Neither is it history. Gibson explains that: 'I am not writing history. Rather, I am seeking a poetics of the past, an attunement to its momentum, something ruminative, revelatory and startling, something imaginative that is informed by history' (134). The notebooks provide scope for ruminations on a range of matters, including Indigenous people's worldviews and philosophy, the relationship between oral and written languages, cross-cultural relations in the new colony, and the politics of patronage in eighteenth-century science. At the same time, they are the basis for further refinement of a literary experiment that Gibson had begun with his excellent *Seven Versions of an Australian Badland* (2002). He calls the approach 'versioning' (vii). This time there are twenty-six versions or views, providing a kaleidoscopic account. Each represents an attempt to write in ways that are true to Dawes, including to his faulting efforts as he develops friendships with some Eora people, especially the adolescent girl Patyegarang, and his struggles to master their language and to understand the nature of the world it registered. The pieces on Dawes' methods for making sense of the local language are insightful. They are matched in perception by Gibson's portraits of Dawes himself. While brilliantly intelligent, Dawes lacked strategic sense when it came to dealing with his superiors. Had he been smarter in those matters, he might have extended his tenure and broadened scope and resources for his vital research projects in the new colony. As it is they were cut short, and the cryptic notebooks are all that remain.

There has been a great deal of scholarship of late on cross-cultural relations in the early years of Sydney Cove. Gibson's work adds an important volume to it as it revisits questions about the ethics, possibilities and limits of cross-cultural perspectives and the place of imagination and conjecture in understanding the past in the present. The stamp of Inga Clendinnen and Greg Dening is clear. Due to its time and place, Dawes' enterprise carries the weight of a foundational or formative encounter, but it is important to remember that his experiences and experiments were repeated on other frontiers, as Martin Thomas' recent work on R. H. Matthews shows. Gibson's careful and sensitive methods, and his cautionary notes, should provide inspiration for other scholars who delve into the intimate worlds in which language is exchanged and learnt, and the processes and relationships through which Aboriginal languages are transformed from an oral form into a written script. These linguistic encounters are characterised by risk, experimentation and courage on both sides. Gibson's work is exemplary for capturing the complex ways in which different cultures of communication interact. The layers of translation involved go far beyond the compilation of word lists. At times, Gibson's discussion relies on a division too starkly drawn between English (written) and Eora (oral) communication cultures. This might have been tempered by attention to Alan Atkinson's insistence about the significance of speech and orality within the colonial culture at Sydney Cove.

Gibson's writing is provocative and poetic. The work is probably best described as writerly, and like all such works at times the satisfactions belong more to the writer than to the reader. Given the sources, the subject and the experimental nature of Gibson's project, the arguments advanced are necessarily speculative and incomplete. The conclusions are always highly qualified. Yet, there is much to gain, and each view repays a second or third reading. As Gibson advises, the twenty-six views do not need to be read in a linear fashion. It is a book to dip into, if only to be reminded about the limits

of the archive, the contingency of lived experience, and the challenges as well as pleasures of writing.

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The Paper War: Morality, Print Culture and Power in Colonial New South Wales.
By Anna Johnston. Perth: UWA Publishing, 2011. Pp. 299. A$39.95 paper.

In *The Paper War*, Johnston takes as her subject the missionary Lancelot Threlkeld (1788–1859) and the controversies in which he was involved in New South Wales, particularly over the Lake Macquarie mission station (1825–1841).

The 1820s and 1830s was 'a liminal period' (8) in New South Wales during which a full-blown settler colony and the institutions of a bourgeois public sphere were emerging from an authoritarian penal regime. It would see struggles over the establishment of a free press, trial by jury, a judiciary increasingly independent of executive power, and calls for representative institutions. Yet the concerns of the penal regime were no mere remnants of a previous order, but continued to operate as active agents of change. This was also the moment during which reforms were implemented to make transportation (in the words of Secretary of State Earl Bathurst) 'an object of real terror', and the colonial authorities remained highly sceptical about the legitimacy of public debate.

Johnston runs these broader struggles within the ranks of colonising Europeans against the increasingly vexed question of relations with Indigenous people. Threlkeld's 'interstitial position on the margins of colonisation' (2), and his identification (limited and ambiguous as it was) with those being dispossessed, opens up a space in which Johnston can interrogate the nexus between colonial knowledge and power. The book is structured around four key modes through which this relationship can be traced: language studies, the press, and the civil and criminal courts. It follows Threlkeld and the controversies about him through trans-imperial scientific societies, an emergent colonial press, the embattled reputations revealed by civil defamation actions, and the position of Indigenous people under the criminal law. All allow us a window into the formation of the key institutions and structures of Australian colonial society, and the 'kinds of subjects and subjectivities that these structures authorised' (8). Throughout, Johnston rises to the challenges presented by a dense and complex archive, from obscure theological debates to the 'formidable technical documents' (70) of Threlkeld's linguistic studies. In tracing these sources, she never fails to recognise the ways in which battles over representation were tied to real consequences in the material world.

Drawing on the work of scholars such as Tony Ballantyne, Alan Lester and Zoe Laidlaw, Johnston emphasises the importance of networks in moving beyond nationally-focused histories that disaggregate the highly interconnected world in which Threlkeld operated. Nevertheless, she makes the important point that networks broke connections apart as much as they knit them together. In his tendency to alienate those who were his natural allies, Threlkeld was a 'disuniting agent of Empire' (3). His story reminds us that the humanitarian movement needs to be studied with due attention to its internal factions and status differentials. It is in these forces, Johnston argues, just as much as in settler opposition (and in Indigenous resistance) that the Lake Macquarie mission failed.

Throughout the book, Johnston insists upon the importance of a textual analysis and of asking questions about *how* the imperial archive was created. She comes to the project as a self-described 'literary scholar', arguing that her approach to the archive 'as a set of writing and reading practices' results in a study 'seeking to make different meanings than an historian might' (4). Quoting Ann Laura Stoler, she maintains that 'sources are not "springs" of historical truths' (225). To many historians sympathetic to interdisciplinary work (and Johnston draws on a large number of them in her secondary research), such assertions about the importance of textuality might sound fairly indistinguishable from the methodologies of good historical practice. Nevertheless, by book-ending her study of Threlkeld with a discussion of the limited ways in which the archive of his life and work has been evoked by the debates of the History Wars, Johnston reminds us of the force with which such theoretical claims may still need to be made in the Australian context.

With extraordinary deftness, *The Paper War* tracks Threlkeld and his controversies through a