

the 'history wars' in comparative perspective

Australia and Japan

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Fujioka Nobukatsu begins his work, *The Sickness of Masochist Perceptions of History*, with a quotation purportedly taken from the report of a year six elementary student in Miyagi Prefecture, Japan. The student exclaims: 'That Japanese killed with pleasure! It is so crazy! What is so fun about killing over 10 million people? I thought that in the past people must have been strange.' Fujioka notes with some concern that throughout Japan, numerous teachers propagate historical lies such as that 'the Japanese military conducted a three-pronged campaign of burning, pillage, and murder' in the Second World War. Fujioka terms this phenomenon 'masochist historical perception' (*jigyaku shikan*). He asserts:

It sets up its own people as more brutal and amoral than any other group in human history, and paints its country's history as a continuous series of demonic acts. It flagellates, curses, castigates, and impeaches its own nation. This view of history, this mental state, I term 'masochist historical perception.' 'Masochist historical perception' is a sickness, a prolonged disease, a growing cancer infused in post war Japanese society, and in particular in media and education circles. If we cannot get over this sickness, Japan cannot be reborn as a healthy nation (*kenzen na kokka*).¹

Keith Windschuttle begins *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*, the first of what he promises will become a series of volumes, with a quotation from Sir William Deane made at a speech commemorating the centenary of Australian federation. Windschuttle paints Sir Deane's speech as just one of 'a number' of 'cultural expressions' on the centenary that accused Australia of committing a genocide of the Aborigines. Windschuttle regards this historical perception as being originally promulgated by influential historians, whose views then infiltrated

all corners of academe, and ultimately gained 'overwhelming support in the media, the arts, the universities and the public service.' Of the historians he claims:

No one who disagrees with them need now apply for any position teaching Australian history at an Australian university. No graduate student seeking to write a dissenting thesis should waste his time applying to any of our academic schools of history. The ruling intellectual environment that has long controlled Aboriginal history has warned off book publishers from recalcitrant authors and even led one press to break a contract to publish a high profile work it had already accepted.²

The term 'revisionism' has referred historically to views that challenge an orthodoxy or official position. As narrative, history continually presents itself with the possibility of revision. A history that denies the possibility of revision is ideologically dogmatic. In this sense revisionism cannot be considered as necessarily a negative phenomenon. Yet revisionism is the term that has been used recently to describe historians who discount the extent or even occurrence of historical tragedies such as massacre, genocide, or even the Nazi holocaust.³ The dogmatic evasion and denunciation of any contradictory evidence by such revisionists can lead to what A. Dirk Moses refers to as the second meaning of revisionism, the posture of denial.⁴

Both Fujioka and Windschuttle present arguments against a supposed orthodoxy that they see as now culturally entrenched. The 'orthodox' historical perspective is denounced as a 'fabrication', and the general conditions whereby this supposed 'orthodoxy' reigns as symptomatic of an embedded 'sickness' in society or the 'killing' of history. Both present this supposed orthodoxy as prone to self-flagellation. Both also present the conditions that have supposedly resulted in the infiltration of a self-denigrating historical perspective throughout society as unprecedented or highly unusual. These conservative neonationalists are surprisingly similar in their repeated claims that the shameful denigration and ruination of national pride in recent times is unique to their own country. Yet, ironically, these views are symptomatic of the rise of neonationalism, itself a global phenomenon.⁵

The 1990s saw the unprecedented politicisation of issues such as the military comfort women and war responsibility in Japan, and reconciliation and the stolen generation in Australia. The 'historical revisionist' offensives were a direct reaction to this political climate. The highly emotive and often personal attacks made by 'revisionists' such as Fujioka and Windschuttle have in turn further fuelled a fierce historical debate in both Australia and Japan that has spilled onto pages of mass media and resulted in what has been coined *rekishi ronsou* or the 'history wars'.

These emergent 'history wars' form a part of wider negotiations and contests over conceptions of time and space, as we face a massive transformation in the configuration of our

sense of memory and place through the infiltration of new technologies, new media and global capital. Historical controversies and what has been referred to as the 'global spread of memory discourses' have thus emerged as an integral part of global configurations, while, paradoxically, historical debate itself is often confined within national discursive structures.⁶

This article seeks to penetrate these national confines through a comparison of the emergence of discourses of restoration 'revisionism' in Japan and Australia, in particular through an examination of the texts of two key revisionists, Fujioka and Windschuttle.⁷ Both 'revisionist' attempts are then placed in the context of a crisis of representation that has accompanied the breakdown of (in Ohsawa Masachi's terms) the 'transcendental other'⁸ or (in Lacanian terms) 'master narratives' in contemporary postmodern times. I argue that in seeking to restore a discourse of Truth, historical revisionism has produced some seemingly contradictory effects. On the one hand, it works to further implode any sense of the Real (in Baudrillard terms) and to reinforce political cynicism and apathy. On the other, it also feeds into and reinforces an anti-intellectual populist nationalism fuelled by paranoia, fear, and denial.

Struggles over the past are inherently a part of transformation in the present and dreams for the future. In this sense it is important to be aware that discourses of historical revisionism operate in parallel (particularly in the case of Japan) with security discourses based on the projection of a de-humanised other as the overriding source of threat that promotes a culture of fortification. In contrast, this article seeks to open up cross-cultural and transnational forms of dialogue and search for new modes of communication about the past in the present.

— FORCES OF 'RESTORATION': WINDSCHUTTLE, FUJIOKA, AND 'HISTORICAL REVISIONISM'

The 1990s saw the emergence into the political spotlight of questions of responsibility and compensation for past actions in both Australia and Japan. These phenomena were linked to a transformation in international relations following the end of the Cold War and increasing transnational linkages. These cultural and political linkages built upon the efforts of activists and critical historiography from the 1960s onwards, in particular, indigenous movements which sought the recognition of historical responsibility for colonial rule, and international women's movements which focused on colonial and wartime violence against women.⁹

In 1994, the International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) released a report concluding that the Japanese military's system of 'comfort women' constituted a crime against humanity, and that it violated international treaties ratified by the Japanese government as well as the basic principles of international law. In 1996, the International Commission for Human Rights released a report stating that the 'comfort women' system was a form of 'sexual slavery' in violation of international humanitarian law, and recommending the punishment of those responsible. It also recommended that attention be given to the issue in history education,

that there be a full disclosure of all related historical documents, that an official apology be made and individual compensation be provided.¹⁰

Subsequently, victims and legal professionals mobilised in response against the limitations of Japan's court system. This culminated in the International Women's War Crimes Tribunal (*Nihongun seidoreisei o sabaku josei kokusai senpan houtei*), held in December 2000. The massive tribunal was organised by the Violence Against Women and War Network (VAWW-NET) Japan, involved five hundred overseas participants, including approximately eighty female plaintiffs, and lasted three days. The tribunal aimed to identify the extent to which the 'military comfort women system' constituted war crimes, and examined the question of responsibility. Within a wider contemporary context, the tribunal also demanded the need for legal responsibility to be taken for violence against women in areas of armed conflict throughout the world.¹¹

In Australia, a similar coincidence of transformation in legal and historical consciousness can be observed. One key difference is the vital role played by the judicial system and key politicians in this transformation. Labor prime minister Paul Keating advocated reconciliation in the early years of the decade, and two key High Court cases, the so-called Mabo judgment of 1992 and the Wik decision of 1996, marked the first official judicial acknowledgement of a lawful ownership of land by Indigenous people that pre-dated and survived British colonisation.¹² As Ghassan Hage observes, 'indigenous struggles, the diffusion of new critical historiography, and Mabo all worked together to create an important cultural transformation within Australia'.¹³

In short, the breakdown of the Cold War order was accompanied by the opening up of possibilities for more diverse historical narratives and memories, challenges to national amnesia and repression, and the emergence of movements calling for the recognition of responsibility for atrocities committed in the past. These movements comprised attempts not only to envisage the past, but also to transform the present in part through linkages between local activism and international networks and organisations.¹⁴ These movements were critical of both the violence associated with colonialism and the marginalisation of colonial experiences. They formed part of 'memory practices' that questioned modernity's trust in progress and development, and sought to counteract the triumphalism of modernisation theory now in its latest guise as globalisation.¹⁵

As a response to these currents, there has also emerged reactionary attempts to reinforce a sense of social and cultural stability through the promotion of national belonging based on exclusion and, in the case of Australia, the 'universalist' principles of Western civilisation. In Japan, historical revisionism was seen as an attempt to revive 'publicness' in the context of the whittling away of welfare structures by dressing up the symbolic authority of the state.¹⁶ In relation to Australia, a similar point has been made in regards to the anti-

immigration discourse (or what Hage refers to as the ‘discourse of Anglo decline’) associated with such figures as Pauline Hanson. That is, a fundamental sense of loss or abandonment by government may underpin the fear of lack of control infused within a preoccupation with race.¹⁷ Both Windschuttle and Fujioka emerged as key figures speaking for broader forces that seek to deny racial and gender violence as a foundational theme of colonisation and war aggression.

— AGAINST THE GRAIN? ANTI-‘ORTHODOX’ NEOCONSERVATISM

Ghassan Hage notes that while the emergence of the discourse of Anglo decline in Australia obviously reflected a change in the status of Anglo-Australianness as a dominant national culture, it also tended to *exaggerate* this change. This exaggeration reflects the paranoia that often infuses neonationalist discourse. While in part such exaggerations may be strategic, Hage concludes that above all they are a reflection of the ‘neurotic character of the gaze that is collecting the empirical data’.¹⁸ The 1990s certainly marked the unprecedented politicisation of violent colonial histories in Australia and Japan. Yet movements calling for recognition, responsibility and compensation hardly encompassed an ‘orthodoxy’ in either country. The ruling government in Japan and particularly after 1996 in Australia remained largely hostile to calls for the recognition of responsibility in the comfort women and stolen generation issues or in broader questions of wartime and colonial violence. Both Windschuttle and Fujioka, however, present their positions as assaults against an entrenched (and necessarily ‘false’) perception of history. And their targets are the historiography that played a key role in addressing frontier conflict and war aggression, such as the work of Henry Reynolds and Yoshimi Yoshiaki respectively.

— PRESENTATION OF A COUNTER-HISTORY

Fujioka and Windschuttle present supposedly non-politicised and balanced counter-histories. Windschuttle argues that in fact ‘the British colonization of this continent was the least violent of all Europe’s encounters with the New World’.¹⁹ This led to his famous figure of 118 deaths in colonial Tasmania, later revised to 120:

In the entire period from 1803, when the colonists arrived, to 1834, when all but one family of Aborigines had been removed to Flinders Island, the British were responsible for killing 118 of the original inhabitants—less than four deaths a year.²⁰

The ‘dying out’ of the Tasmanian Aborigines is attributed as ‘almost entirely’ due to:

the long isolation that had left them vulnerable to introduced diseases, especially influenza, pneumonia and tuberculosis; and the fact that they traded and prostituted their women to such an extent that they lost the ability to reproduce themselves.²¹

Fujioka played a central role in the formation of the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform (*Atarashii Rekishi Kyōkasho o Tsukuru Kai*, hereafter *Tsukurukai*), formed in late 1996 in direct opposition to the inclusion of the comfort women issue in some Japanese textbooks. Subsequently, Fujioka was a key figure in the compilation of the group's own textbook. He has also edited a series of anthologies under the title *The History not Taught in Textbooks* (*Kyōkasho ga oshienai rekishi*). Fujioka's counter-history focuses on the important international position of Japan, and interprets the Second World War as a whole in at least a partially positive light.²² Needless to say, the comfort women's experiences and acts of Japanese aggression do not play a role in this success story. In attempting to emphasise the difference between military 'collaboration' and the 'operation' of comfort houses, Fujioka equates the relation between the military and the comfort women to the position of a private canteen inside a government office. According to this metaphor, while the government may arrange for a private company to manage the canteen facilities, the government body itself plays no role in its management and administration. The obvious implication being presented is that, like canteen food, the administration, management and 'delivery' of prostitutes in comfort houses were left to private institutions.²³

At least two key common characteristics can be discerned in Fujioka and Windschuttle's rejection of the existence of systemic colonial violence. The first is a leap of logic which enables each to conclude that discrepancies in evidence and analysis prove the entire history of racial and gender violence is tantamount to fabrication. In the case of Windschuttle, detailed investigation into the footnotes of historians from the 'orthodox' school—namely such figures as Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan—form a key part of the strategy.²⁴ Fujioka similarly seeks out discrepancies in and denounces the analysis of critical historians and the oral histories of comfort women.²⁵ A second common characteristic is a rejection of the importance of the history of colonial violence—a rejection necessarily founded on disregard for the victim. Examining A.G.L. Shaw's biography on lieutenant-governor George Arthur, Windschuttle counts that eleven of 115 pages on Arthur's career in Van Diemen's Land are devoted to Aboriginal policy and practice. This, Windschuttle surmises, 'is about the right weight the subject deserved'.²⁶

The 'Aboriginal' and 'comfort woman' in Windschuttle's and Fujioka's texts respectively are treated with a mixture of benevolence and contempt. On the one hand, Windschuttle lambasts historians for devaluing the 'mental universe' that Aborigines inhabited.²⁷ Yet Windschuttle rests his thesis on the premise that Aboriginal culture did not encompass a conception of trespass, without attempting to conceive of the connections Indigenous culture maintained with the land or 'country', or the devastation which colonisation brought about as a result.²⁸ Assertive Aboriginal activists, and successful land rights claims, are presented as posing a threat to Windschuttle's uniform (colonised) conception of time and space. In addi-

tion to deploying the analogy of the canteen, Fujioka, along with other members of *Tsukurukai*, seeks to imagine the history of the comfort houses as analogous with the history of the toilet—while both may have existed, they are not subjects deemed appropriate to be included in school history texts.

In short, the assertions of the colonised ‘other’ are utilised only to the extent that they serve to reinforce the closed space of the speaker. The result is a necessary severing of dialogue and rejection of all that is deemed to threaten the taming of memory and landscape into a unified, fortified, patriarchal time-space. Both seek to restore Truth, Windschuttle in the form of positivist historiography, Fujioka in the shape of the proud National History of Japan. By presenting these frameworks as absolute and beyond question from the outset, both forfeit the possibility of ethical reflection.²⁹

— ‘ANTI-POLITICAL’ POLEMICS AND ‘COMMONSENSE’ NATIONALISM

In presenting their counter-histories, both Windschuttle and Fujioka present themselves as non-polemic and opposed to the politicisation of history. Windschuttle is thus quoted as stating:

My political agenda is that I think history has been ruined by political agendas. You can call that a political agenda if you want to. But I’m not just out to discredit Henry [Reynolds]; I’m trying to find the truth of the matter.³⁰

In contrast to the politicised dualism of the ‘goodies and baddies historical perspective’ (*zen-dama akudama shikan*) that he sees as pervading postwar Japanese historiography, Fujioka presents his reassertion of national history as ‘commonsense’.³¹ Yet as critics have pointed out, in the Australian and Japanese contexts Fujioka and Windschuttle are far from disengaged, and this forms a core tension in their assertions.

While Windschuttle blasts the supposed ‘orthodoxy’ as the produce of a political agenda and calls for the redemption of objective historiography, an often crude polemic infuses his writing. He states his position as against those ‘white historians’ who have ‘set themselves up as prophets blessed with a vision hidden from ordinary Australians’.³² He presents ‘the persistent demand for Prime Minister John Howard to say “sorry” to the Aborigines’ in a negative light. He explicitly opposes Indigenous land rights and presents the ‘decay’ of Ridson Cove under Aboriginal ownership to support his position. He denounces a ‘radical Aboriginal politics’ that is ‘the politics of victimization and demonisation’.³³ He also rejects the rights of Indigenous groups to claim the ownership of relics or historical documents, which he sees as made by ‘radicals’ who want to ‘dictate how whites should interpret black history’.

In relation to Fujioka, as Gavan McCormack observes:

By affirming the idea of a “correct history”, to be given official status and promotion, Fujioka clearly implies that there is also an “incorrect history” that should be suppressed. He thereby reinstates the very *zandama-akudama* dualism that he claims to oppose ...³⁴

While Fujioka presents his analysis as an attempt to move beyond a (all-Japanese-history-is-good) ‘pro-great Asian war perspective’ versus a (all-Japanese-history-is-bad) ‘masochist historical perception’, he clearly focuses his argument against the latter. Fujioka and other neonationalist ‘revisionists’ do seek to differentiate themselves from the former ‘pro-great Asian war perspective’. Yet Fujioka’s historical narrative also coincides in various ways with traditional conservatism. Through this ambiguity, and by maintaining a highly ambivalent position on the Emperor, the *Tsukurukai*’s image of newness has gained support among younger generation Japanese.³⁵

Both Fujioka and Windschuttle reached their positions after originally embarking on a career as left-wing academics. As a student, Fujioka was by his own account a believer in ‘one-nation pacifism’. His transformation was secured by experiencing a sense of humiliation in Japan’s response to the Gulf War. After this he came to vocally denounce what he saw as self-flagellating historical perceptions forcefully imposed by a foreign power in the wake of Japan’s defeat in the Second World War.³⁶ Windschuttle describes his own political transformation thus: ‘In the 70s I was a Marxist, in the 80s I was a social democrat and in the 90s I’m a conservative: it’s called growing up’.³⁷ As newly converted ‘revisionists’, both Fujioka and Windschuttle are virulently anti-Marxist.

— UNIVERSALISM AND PARTICULARISM IN THE AGE OF CYNICISM

Windschuttle and Fujioka do not present their ‘non-political’ polemics in exactly the same way. In the works of Fujioka, the tension produced in seeking to present a non-polemic dogmatism is infused within an acrobatic logic that combines a kind of postmodernist relativism with reassertions of the importance of inculcating a proud national history. In the case of Fujioka, and even more blatantly in the work of other members of the *Tsukurukai* such as Nishio Kanji and Sakamoto Takao, acrobatic logic is accompanied by a discernable cynicism. Japanese intellectual Ohsawa Masachi traces the emergence of a sense of cynicism in Japan to the maturing of consumerism in the 1980s. While ideology may be regarded as a false doctrine that is nevertheless believed or self-evidently held to be true, this sense of cynicism includes a knowingly awareness of the fallacy of one’s own belief to form what Ohsawa terms an ‘enlightened false consciousness’.³⁸ Azuma Hiroki terms this trend in Japanese neoconservatism ‘totalising theory as fake’.³⁹

These differences can be traced back to the difference in absolute world views which Windschuttle and Fujioka are seeking to defend. While very much working in the framework of

national history, Windschuttle aims to protect the Western cannon. Fujioka's motive is rather to liberate the nation from the masochist historical perception that emerged from Japan's war defeat. These differing world views relate to the particular historical experiences of Australia and Japan. In Japan, modernisation was accompanied by a counter-hegemonic Japanese nationalist discourse that incorporated resentment against the universalist inscriptions of the modern West. Japanese imperialism did not simply work upon assumptions of universalism founded upon binaries such as Orient/Occident. Celebrations of ambiguity became integrated into Japan's own colonisation project—couched as the 'liberation' of Asia while at the same time objectifying Asian colonies according to Eurocentric assumptions of civilisation and progress. A desire to protest against and transcend the forces of enlightenment reason was at the heart of the very particular logic of much nationalist thought.⁴⁰

In accordance with this counter-modern, anti-rationalist nationalist tradition, neonationalist discourse in Japan draws upon and even promotes certain cultural ambiguities and contradictions. On a more literal level, the continued ambiguous positioning of Japan between 'East' and 'West' is also discernable in Fujioka's heightened sense of persecution and what has been described as his 'extreme complex towards the West'.⁴¹ This takes the form of a continual urge to see and value the self from the view of the defining (Western) other.

Windschuttle, by contrast, presents his argument according to what he claims are rationalist principles. Windschuttle does not explicitly admit a cynical awareness of the fallacy of his own guise as disengaged positivist. Ultimately, however, Windschuttle's attempt to reassert a universalism premised on a sense of Western superiority faces a similar fate to that of Fujioka's particularism. To use the metaphor employed by Sakai Naoki, both succumb to the fate of the frog in the well, oblivious to the walls around him that define his world view:

For the frog, the totality of the well can never be visible. Therefore, it would never know that it is confined to a tiny space; it is not aware that what it believes to be the entire universe is merely a small well.⁴²

At times, Japanese historical revisionists appear content to cynically admit that they are reconstructing the well's wall by admitting their totalised world view is a fallacy. In contrast, Windschuttle does not celebrate the fallacy of his assertions. Yet, as symptomatic of attempts to *restore* a sense of wholeness that has already been decomposed from within, neither is the fallacy of Windschuttle's guise as disengaged positivist very far from the surface. In comparison to the 'fake narratives' of Japanese neonationalists, this may be described as a condition of cynicism yet to fully declare its own state of being, symbolised in the image of the frog fervently trying to reconstruct the walls of the well while simultaneously denying their existence.

In his analysis of Japanese thought after the postwar 'breakdown', Ohsawa Masachi introduces a contemporary Japanese novel by Kojima Nobuo, *The Lovely Days* (*Uruwashiki hibi*), published in 1997. The main character in the story, Miwa Shunsuke, is the same one who featured in his earlier novel *Embracing Family* (*Houyou Kazoku*), published in 1970. The story of the earlier novel has itself also progressed in time to thirty years later. In the earlier novel Miwa Shunsuke's wife had an affair with an American soldier. In the second novel Miwa's first wife has passed away, and Miwa, now himself a novelist, lives with his second wife and child. The symbol of the USA, the soldier, has in other words disappeared, leaving Miwa himself as patriarchal figure. Yet the wife and child of Miwa have come to suffer from acute amnesia. Miwa's wife's amnesia occurred during a walk in the woods. While earlier she had been diligently following in the footsteps of her husband, suddenly she stopped listening to him and was overcome by a sense of disillusionment. At that point she lost the ability to remember. Ohsawa interprets the story as symbolising the inability to write history in an age in which belief in the transcendental other (here the figure of the patriarch/novelist) has been lost. This he terms the 'age of the void'.⁴³

Neonationalist forces of restoration and the ensuing 'history wars' have emerged in the context of this representational crisis and the loss of transcendental other as dictator of historical truth. The emergence of broad-based movements calling for responsibility for colonial and wartime violence formed a part of a broader questioning of Eurocentric/nationalist and patriarchal historical narratives. Histories of repression formed a counter-narrative that directly challenged structures of violence concealed within historical narratives of progress that sought to 'civilise' the other. These histories were also accompanied by (and at times formed a tense relation with) postmodern-influenced deconstructions of the historical subject and postcolonial-influenced analyses on the connection between power structures and the production of discourses of truth.

Just as ensuing 'history wars' have emerged in the context of a broader crisis of representation, they have been fought out in an arena reaching beyond the confines of the academic discipline of history. Prior to emerging as a key controversial figure in contemporary historical debate, Windschuttle was in fact a lecturer in media studies. Fujioka holds a professorship in education. Both Windschuttle and Fujioka have utilised their expertise in the realms of media and education respectively to promote their historical claims, and it is within these realms that the fiercest 'wars' over history have been fought out.⁴⁴ On Japanese television, for instance, in programs such as Asahi's *Asa made nama terebi* (Live Television till Dawn) fierce debate takes the form of a round table discussion. Participants are chosen for

their polarised views, and the ensuing fierce and prolonged discussion is televised live and observed by a studio audience, who participate through controlled question and commentary sessions.⁴⁵

At least two positive consequences of these ‘history wars’ have been cited. That is, that the disputes have aroused an interest in history, and reinforced the need for historians to ensure accurate citation of sources.⁴⁶ However, it is important not to overlook other effects, in particular the trivialisation of historical debate and the amplification of political apathy and cynicism. As in the context of debates over immigration, the media’s obsession with figures such as Windschuttle and Fujioka can at least partly be explained as resulting from an infantile narcissistic fascination.⁴⁷ The discourse of populist politicians such as Pauline Hanson and, in Japan, Ishihara Shintaro is consumed as entertainment much like that (to borrow Hage’s metaphor) of the unchecked extremism of the bigoted child.⁴⁸ Historical ‘revisionism’ couches infantile rhetoric in the guise of academic analysis and further enables its consumption, now in the form of academic debate as spectacle.

Takashi Fujitani has analysed the way in which the televising of the Showa Emperor’s funeral in 1989 saw both a reassertion of hegemonic national space through the mass dissemination of the funeral rites as pageantry, while at the same time trivialising the Emperor system into a form of consumable entertainment.⁴⁹ In a similar light, media obsession and public consumption of the ‘history wars’ can work to reassert nationalist historical assumptions as well as trivialise the discourse of history, leading to the further collapse of boundaries between informed analysis and entertainment, and between entertainment and politics. Consumed as polarised simulacra, the ‘history wars’ invite further apathy and cynicism.

In this way, excessive media attention can, in one sense, have the exact opposite effect to Windschuttle’s and Fujioka’s asserted aims. That is, far from restoring conservative nationalist discourse to its place as historical truth, the consumption of debate as spectacle leads to the further implosion of a sense of the ‘real’. Yet a further consequence, as with the funeral pageantry as spectacle, consumption of the ‘history wars’ also works to reproduce national amnesia. Consumed by the spectator through less participatory forms of mass media such as television, ‘history wars’ cease to reinforce a culture of non-communication, where communication is seen as ‘an exchange, a reciprocal space of a speech and response, and thus of *responsibility*’.⁵⁰ Dialogue between the speaking national subject and the Aboriginal or Korean is foreclosed, as the voices of those about whom debate has ostensibly ensued are ostracised and subject to further objectification.

It is important not to exaggerate the impact of historical revisionism. In Australia, there has been sustained academic criticism of Windschuttle’s claims. In Japan, sustained grassroots opposition resulted in the *Tsukurukai*’s textbook only being adopted in the first round by the Tokyo Metropolitan and Ehime Prefectural education boards, who had the

jurisdiction to select the text for a few schools and classes for mentally and physically impaired children.⁵¹

At the same time, revisionist discourse has worked to significantly alter the parameters of debate within public discourse in both countries, perhaps particularly in Japan. It has also provided an intellectual support to populist nationalism. Presented in direct opposition to progressive intellectuals, and as anti-establishment, the rhetoric of Fujioka and the *Tsukurukai* resonate with populist nationalist sentiments. In contrast to intellectuals who suffer from alienation from the populace, Fujioka and Kobayashi emerge as espousing 'the thought of the common man' (*shisō teki shomin*).⁵² The *Tsukurukai* defines its views as simply 'commonsense'. Rather than maintaining a fixed consensus on ideological principles, often its only commonality is a rejection of 'the left' (*sayoku*).

There are similarities with the trend towards anti-intellectualism observed in the context of Australia. This anti-intellectualism works according to a three-stage mechanism of assumption-building:

1. 'The people' already know everything there is to know: 'life taught them';
2. Consequently, anything the 'intellectual elite' says that is not known by the people is superfluous knowledge, if not actively against the people;
3. Therefore, any attack on the knowledge of the intellectual elite is a defence of the knowledge of the people.⁵³

As Hage also points out, such anti-intellectualism also has historical resonances with populist nationalist fascism.⁵⁴

The case of Japan illustrates particularly clearly the way in which the sense of victimisation and attack on liberal intellectualism in historical revisionist discourse feeds into and reinforces an emergent assertive paranoid nationalism. Fujioka has recently also been highly vocal on the *rachi* issue (the kidnapping of Japanese by North Korea) and *Tsukurukai* has extensive links with another grassroots right-wing organisation, the National Association for the Rescue of Japanese Kidnapped by North Korea (NARKN, or in Japanese shortened to *Sukuukai*). Denial of history and an acute sense of victimisation form key components of a psychology of fear and insecurity. This is mobilised to legitimise mechanisms that further the move from a society of care to one of control, promoting a cycle of increasing suspicion and mistrust.⁵⁵

— HISTORICAL TRUTHFULNESS AND LIVING HISTORIES

Just as historical revisionism emerged from within a crisis in representation, so have responses to it. As a result, there has also been a discernable tension *among* critiques of historical revisionism, particularly in relation to the thorny question of historical truth. In overly simpli-

fied terms, this tension may be seen thus. At one end of the spectrum lies traditional leftist historians who tend to focus on the way revisionists distort historical facts. At the other end are historians influenced by poststructuralism or postmodernism who focus on the power relations involved in the production of historical truths. Underlying these tensions is a fundamental dilemma: How can one mount an effective critique against neonationalist 'revisionism' without either reasserting a simple positivism (an authoritative 'correct' alternative) or lending support to 'postmodern' nihilism or relativist cynicism? This is also intimately tied to a further issue: that is, in the context of a crisis in representation and the infiltration of new global media technologies and capital, how can the simultaneously autocratic and trivialising cultures of consumption and mass media be addressed and transformed to facilitate dialogue?

In response to these conundrums, Morris-Suzuki has proposed the notion of 'historical truthfulness'. While our inevitable implication in the processes of conceiving history discounts the existence of a single authoritative historical truth, reflecting on our implication with the past requires a historical truthfulness. Historical truthfulness is conceived as an 'open-ended and evolving relationship with past events and people'. Morris-Suzuki also emphasises the need to move towards a political economy of historical truthfulness, by promoting 'a society which creates space for critical understanding and open exchange of multiple interpretations of the past, understanding and exchange which extends across national boundaries'.⁵⁶

In the context of Australia, Klaus Neumann proposes the importance of a 'feeling' and 'living' history. Rather than exorcising the ghosts of the past as does historical revisionism, a living history acknowledges their haunting presence. This acknowledgement has resonances with the notion of implication—that is, the recognition that we are continually implicated in our pasts through living in the present.⁵⁷ A living history is attuned to the way in which the present is immersed in the violence of the past. It also can trace the process whereby silence over this immersion is maintained by, and serves to reinforce, confusion, vulnerability, fear and hatred.⁵⁸

In view of these important proposals, movements seeking recognition of colonial and wartime atrocities themselves contain such possibilities for re-conceiving history. By forcing a break with the past they inaugurated a new field of social, political and legal possibilities.⁵⁹ In opening up space for a dialogue between different world views, they also pointed to a less totalising view of the past, the present, and past–present relations. Under colonialism, the exclusion and arbitrary assimilation of the colonised other was supported by an imperial system of knowledge, which claimed to be the absolute truth, and an extreme imbalance in flow of information between coloniser and colonised. Under postcolonial conditions, and with the cultural hybridisation of the other, the domains of difference separating coloniser

and colonised come under challenge.⁶⁰ Yet a severe imbalance in this process still exists. Recent movements questioning the legacies of colonialism seek to redress this imbalance further by implying the need to hybridise the coloniser. They question the monologic of both universalism (as based on Western-centred notions of civilisation) and particularism (as nationalism or fundamentalism), and criticise the way in which both avoid ‘dialogue encounters’.⁶¹

In Japan, the International Women’s Tribunal held the potential for a ‘deconstruction’ of international humanitarian law towards its more inclusively universal application than that traditionally conceived within Eurocentric notions of universalism. Such an inclusive application might, for example, question the contradictions in a notion of ‘justice’ founded directly following the atomic bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima as well as Japanese military aggression.⁶² In challenging the division of public and private, the tribunal also politicised the structural connections between rape as a war crime and domestic violence. In moving beyond the judicial framework of the nation-state, it highlighted ‘the problem of what falls “in between”’ and established ‘a place where the concepts of justice and peace can be re-constituted’.⁶³ At the same time, it encouraged the recognition of different dimensions of nationalism, gender and class of their mutual relations and of the points at which they conflict. The term ‘transversalism’ has been used to conceive of a dialogue that moves beyond both universalism and relativism.⁶⁴

In Australia, the High Court’s Mabo decision held the potential to ‘undermine the legal capture of aboriginal territory’—in other words, to hybridise the colonial polity through recognition of the validity of Indigenous law and custom. The recognition of Native title is in this sense ‘the partial deterritorialisation of the legal apparatus of capture by means of a refusal of its primary stage: the establishment of a uniform space of comparison and appropriation’.⁶⁵ Whereas previously there had only been a uniform legal space of crown land, Aboriginal or Native title holds the potential to challenge the system of land capture; that is the appropriation, commodification and exploitation of the land as overseen by the monopoly of the sovereign state.

This challenge also holds the potential to embrace a temporal as well as a radical spatial deterritorialisation of the structures of colonial capture. Refusing the primary establishment of a uniform time of capture and appropriation can open perceptions of history to incorporate fragmented times and localities. This enables a redressing of the conditions whereby hybridisation has, up to this point, been an arbitrary and almost exclusively one-way process.⁶⁶ In affinity with the endeavour towards a political economy of historical truthfulness, this endeavour forms part of a broader attempt to redress cultural, political, economic, and discursive structures that support and reinforce a one-way process of communication. On a macro level, this attempt necessarily includes an obligation to recapture the ethnical

foundations of a society imprisoned within neoliberal economic profitability.⁶⁷ On a micro level, it also involves facilitating open communication through an ethics of attention. Learning from Indigenous culture, an ethics of attention sees the world as a living entity, and begins open and ethical dialogue not only between humans but also within our environment.⁶⁸

As one reason for opposing the inclusion of the comfort woman issue in Japanese textbooks, Fujioka argues ‘nothing is gained by precociously exposing the dark side of humans’.⁶⁹ Here, in the obsession with brightness and light, the (on the surface perhaps seemingly incompatible) marriage between neoliberalism and neonationalism is exposed. The dual capitalist processes of the cultural consumption of amnesia and a national remembrance of forgetting merge in an obsession with brightness. A massive lighting-up project in Hiroshima⁷⁰ and attempts to rewrite the past for tourist consumption in Okinawa⁷¹ become a part of processes that dress up the authority of the state. The omnipotent desire to infuse brightness and light combines with a neurotic fear of the ‘other’ encroaching on the uniform time-space of tamed and colonised national landscape. ‘Bright’ discourses of restoration provide sanitised sites of memory that serve as symbols of a sense of community. This occurs in the context of social dislocation, as communities themselves are increasingly galvanised through fear and control.⁷²

Windschuttle’s and Fujioka’s denial of colonial history is at one and the same time a refusal to engage in the issues of the present. Windschuttle, for instance, disdains as moralists those who lament environmental degradation, while Fujioka conceives of the inculcation of national morals as the solution to youth crime without any attempt to conceive of the causes of social and political dislocation among Japan’s younger generation. Refusing dialogue, projecting uncertainty onto fear of the other, and denying multiple crises in representation resonate with a denial of broader social, cultural and ecological crises.

In contrast, an ethical response to the multiple crises of late capitalism would refuse to fill the void left by the disappearance of a transcendental other with acrobatic attempts to enact its return. ‘We must avoid such attempts. That we now know.’⁷³ Within Nazism, Japanese imperialist ideology and Western colonialism, a sense of transcendence was dependent on the arbitrary and violent expulsion and/or ‘enlightenment’ of an other; the ‘other’ of the colonising subject. In contrast, the art of living counter to all forms of fascism can only start through delving into the enemy within, ‘the fascism in us all, in our heads and in our everyday behaviour, the fascism that causes us to love power, to desire the very thing that dominates and exploits us’.⁷⁴

In the midst of the horrors of fascism, Walter Benjamin wrote of the need for meditation and the profound reconsideration of our conception of history. Hannah Arendt describes the thought of Benjamin in the face of the rise of fascism in Europe as:

Like a pearl diver who descends to the bottom of the sea, not to excavate the bottom and bring it to light but to pry loose the rich and the strange, the pearls and the coral in the depths, and bring them to the surface ...⁷⁵

The omnipresent fear of forgetting, the amnesic condition of historical polemics as media spectacle, and the pervasion of paranoid nationalist culture under global capitalism in our present times also call for a need for deep reflection.⁷⁶ Facing present crises requires deep reflection on our past, and on how we articulate it. We too must dive into our past and our inner selves, and find in the profound silence of the deep ocean floor a means to communicate and remember. Like the ocean diver, the aim of this descent is not to excavate the bottom, but to find peace of mind and experience, from where we can bring back crystallised thoughts to the world of the living. New-found lifelines of communication within the world and its histories open new corridors in the depths of our own wells, bringing with them the possibility of alternative futures.

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