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Revisionism and Denial

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During the 1980s and 1990s, North American politicians, educators and intellectuals engaged in bitter debate over the status of 'Western civilisation' in their school and university curricula. Was it the source of a venerable canon of classical literature with which to assimilate minorities into the American melting pot, or rather a pernicious tradition of 'dead white males' that prevented the development of an authentic multiculturalism? The American 'culture wars' were watched with great interest from abroad, but they were far from unique.¹ All modernising societies comprise factions within their intelligentsia that struggle with one another to impose an authoritative interpretation of political and cultural reality on their respective public spheres. In this rivalry for cultural capital – prestige and influence – they deploy an arsenal of rhetorical devices to discredit the opposition and enhance their own position in the public-intellectual field. Two of the most common are 'political correctness' and 'revisionism'.

'Political correctness' was invented in the 1980s by American neo-conservatives who re-named the term that the left had used to discipline itself – 'ideological soundness' – to attack the perceived dominance of postmodern/multicultural ideas in the academy. By playing on the liberal unease about taboos and commitment to freedom of expression, the charge of 'political correctness' has proven a remarkably effective weapon. Much has been written on the subject, but the term has seen less service since the mid-1990s after its

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users began setting the political and cultural tone in a conservative direction.²

The origins of revisionism are much older. The term was used first in the 1890s in a fractious debate among socialist intellectuals in Germany and during the Dreyfus affair in France. Since the 1970s, it has appeared in a number of countries in debates about national myths. The simultaneous rise of Holocaust denial has made it all the more controversial because Holocaust deniers want to claim they too are revisionists, seeking merely to set the record straight. Revisionism could appear – or be made to appear – morally dubious. While the content of revisionism varies from case to case, its meaning as a speech act is constant: revisionists assail orthodoxies.

Accordingly, revisionism is not a coherent movement but a rhetorical weapon wielded in the symbolic struggles that constitute any free academic and public sphere.³ As such, it can obscure as much as it reveals. Revisionism posits an orthodoxy that often exists solely in the mind of its proponents, just as political correctness implies moral and intellectual censorship that may or may not exist. Yet there is a difference between the terms. Political correctness always carries a negative connotation, while revisionism can be seen as heroic by those wishing to storm the parapets of official interpretation. At the same time, it can appear heretical if the orthodoxy is regarded widely as legitimate. Predictably, the ‘orthodox’ opponents of ‘revisionists’ will attempt to tar them as ‘deniers’. One of the aims of belligerents in culture wars, then, is to define the parameters of legitimacy and public ‘common sense’.

It is no accident that the vocabulary of religious discipline suffuses these debates. They concern moral and ethical issues in which intellectuals believe passionately. Their personal identity is also at stake. Collective ego ideals, like ‘the nation’, constitute a core component of the selves of the protagonists. For the nationalist, attacks on his cherished ideal are experienced as a diminution of his personhood (usually male), sometimes to the extent of inducing castration anxiety.⁴ Whether they love or hate their nation, or entertain rival conceptions of it, the pride or shame that intellectuals feel is the source of the moral fervour underlying the many debates about revisionism.

What gives them a religious dimension is that they involve questions of good and evil. More often than not, the bone of contention is whether a loved/hated collective or cause is implicated in mass crimes. Because communists, to take another example, ascribed to their ideal a salvific role in world history, they scrambled to save its reputation against the accusation that it was intrinsically totalitarian (often by wilful blindness to Stalinist crimes), just as surely as anti-communists sought converts to liberal democracy which they saw as the redeeming force in global affairs.⁵

The Australian culture wars are no exception. Most recently, the eschatological urge of conservatives to claw back the left-liberal gains of the 1980s and 1990s has culminated in the self-publication by media analyst Keith Windschuttle of *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History*. Its target is what he calls the ‘orthodox interpretation’ which supposedly views Australian history as genocidal or even holocaustal.⁶ Not only does he dispute the facts presented by the ‘orthodoxy’, he also proposes a ‘counter-history’ of British colonialism in Van Diemen’s Land that identifies closely with the settlers. His accusation that historians concocted the evidence of massacres has proved seductive to many, who have folded his ‘discovery’ into their closely nurtured prejudices against ‘intellectuals’ and the ‘new class.’⁷ As might be expected, his critics have labelled him both a revisionist and denier.⁸

Windschuttle’s book and articles have provoked considerable public controversy not only about the facts of the past, but also regarding the production of historical knowledge, the status of intellectuals and the public role of history. My aim here is to further understanding of these issues by situating his ‘revisionism’/‘denial’ in historical and international context. Does the Australian situation bear any resemblance to culture wars in other countries? Is Windschuttle a revisionist, a denier, or both?

Revisionisms and Denial

Revisionism had two meanings when it appeared a little over a century ago. The first one varied according to the identity of the dominant interpretation or official position. In the famous ‘revisionism controversy’ in

German social democracy, for example, orthodox Marxist intellectuals hurled it as a term of abuse against fellow socialist Eduard Bernstein, who advocated gradualist reformism. The revolutionary goal could not be abandoned, they insisted. Marxism was a scientific, not ethical, socialism.⁹ Revisionism was officially condemned by the Social Democratic Party of Germany, and Bernstein was lucky to escape expulsion. In Marxist circles and countries, revisionism became synonymous with heresy, and excommunication was its dire consequence.

More important still was the contemporaneous Dreyfus Affair, the controversy surrounding the notorious imprisonment in 1894 of the French-Jewish army officer Alfred Dreyfus for allegedly selling secrets to the Germans.¹⁰ The revisionists were the left-liberal intellectuals – the so-called Dreyfusards – led by the novelist Emile Zola, who in 1898 launched a crusade to revise the judgement and prove the innocence of the man languishing on Devil's Island. Here the meaning of revisionism was determined in the same way as with the German socialists: as a challenge to an orthodoxy or official position.

Yet the eventual success of the Dreyfusards led to a fateful inversion of its content. After Dreyfus's pardon in 1906, Catholic-monarchist intellectuals – the anti-Dreyfusards – began calling themselves revisionists and insisted truculently on his guilt no matter how much evidence was presented to prove his innocence. Any testimony in his favour was disqualified on one spurious ground or another.¹¹ Theirs was the posture of denial, the second meaning of revisionism. This comes as no surprise. Many of the anti-Dreyfusards lived in a never-never world of paranoia and conspiracy, believing that Jews, Protestants, and freemasons were out to destroy the country by blackening the reputation of the army.

How could they believe in such fantasies? Why do people deny the Holocaust? We are dealing here with the operation of a psychic defence mechanism with which denialists protect themselves from the traumatic consequences of having to incorporate uncomfortable facts into a closed and rigid ideological framework. Freud called this mechanism 'repression'. It has two key symptoms. One is 'splitting', that is, protecting both the love object and self from their own corrupting features by separating and projecting these features onto an external source. The

second is 'repetition', whereby someone acts out his or her pathological attachment by repeating the type of destructive behaviour that led to the controversy in the first place. The denier is unaware of his or her own repression, yet the uncomfortable facts will not go away.¹²

Holocaust revisionism is revisionist in both the senses I have described: heretical and denialist. And because of revisionism's dual meaning, 'orthodox' intellectuals often attempt to discredit their 'revisionist' critics by suggesting they embody both aspects. Whether they do needs to be examined on a case-by-case basis.

Revisionism and Denial in Other Countries

Most twentieth-century revisionism has been of the first mode: its meaning was dependent on the position of contending parties in a dispute. The inter-war Zionist Revisionists, for example, agitated against what they perceived to be a supine Zionist leadership, seeking instead 'maximalist' aims in Palestine: a Jewish majority in a Jewish state on both sides of the Jordan backed by military power. Their targets were both their own communal leaders and the 'minimalist' (i.e., non-Jewish state) reading of the British Balfour declaration.¹³

This meaning was also evident in the revisionism controversies of the immediate post-war decades, three of which concerned Marxism. The first instance mimicked the polemics of the original German dispute, this time concerning the orthodoxy of internal party reformers in eastern European states.¹⁴ In the second, American new left historians in the 1960s challenged the conventional wisdom that Soviet aggression was to blame for the Cold War.¹⁵ Then there was Anglo-French historiography of the French Revolution in which revisionist anti-communist English historians and their ex-communist French counterparts dismantled the dominant Marxist interpretation of the Revolution as a 'bourgeois' and 'world-historical' event.¹⁶

Revisionism sometimes tended towards denialism. In the 1920s, the American historians Sidney B. Fay and Harry E. Barnes rejected the war guilt clause of the Treaty of Versailles and the historical consensus that held Germany and her allies responsible for World War I. But Barnes went further than correcting the one-sided blame of the axis powers.

He exculpated Germany altogether and pronounced the 'unique guilt of France and Russia'. Nothing, it seems, could dissuade him from such an extreme position, leading commentators to place him in an incipient denialist camp.¹⁷

What about the present? The first meaning of the term has endured since the 1970s in Ireland, Israel, the USA and West Germany, but bloody-minded denialism is evident in relation to Japanese and Holocaust history (although it was not German historians who engaged in such denial). All these cases concern the status of powerful national foundation myths. Here is a global phenomenon that has accompanied the rise of humanistic counter-elites within the intelligentsia, which has been dominated by conformist nationalists and technocrats.¹⁸ The appearance of critical intellectuals, especially since the 1960s, and their incremental seepage into influential institutions is the origin of the 'culture wars'. Would nation states remain in thrall to their foundation myths, or would they open themselves to cosmopolitan influences and universal values by recognising the dark side of their histories? Both wings of the intelligentsia could be revisionist depending on the state of the debate, that is, depending on which wing held the commanding heights of cultural transmission. Revisionism of the denialist variety occurs when conservatives convince themselves that their cherished ideals and beliefs remain viable and credible despite being unmasked as morally and factually compromised legends. The question to ask is whether Australian revisionists belong in the first or second group? Let us examine each in turn.

Most revisionisms in the first group concern cases of left-liberals storming conservative citadels. In Ireland, historical consciousness has been firmly indentured to the myth of national redemption. The great drama was the struggle of the Irish people to achieve national consciousness and political independence in the face of British imperial oppression. The purpose of historical scholarship was to remind the population of these facts. Although it had roots in 1920s positivist historiography, revisionism gained momentum in the 1970s among historians who thought that intellectual and public life should not be politicised in this way. The republican teleology made for bad history, and it justified violence, even terrorism.¹⁹ The dispute peaked in the

1990s with the seventy-fifth anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising. In the official version, the rising was the culmination of the national liberation project, but by the time of the anniversary revisionist historians had begun chipping away at iconic republican legends, like the 'genocide' of the Irish by the English in the potato famine of the mid-nineteenth century.²⁰

As might be expected, nationalists struck back. Most influential was the historian Brendan Bradshaw, who expressed the traditional position with endearing candour. Revisionists, he charged, had alienated the historical discipline from 'the people':

Invited to adopt a perspective on Irish history which would depopulate it of heroic figures, struggling in the cause of national liberation; a perspective which would depopulate it of an immemorial native race, the cumulative record of whose achievements and sufferings constitutes such a rich treasury of culture and human experience; a perspective, indeed, from which the modern Irish community would seem as aliens in their own land; in the face of such an invitation the Irish have clung tenaciously to their nationalist heritage. Who could blame them?²¹

Bradshaw entreated historians to empathise with the trauma of the Irish, and to abjure clinical detachment in writing about their suffering, lest a 'credibility gap' open between them and the reading public. Worse still, they might be too soft on the British.

Undeniably, revisionism 'has been crucial in forming a more liberal, internationalist and secular political culture' in Ireland, as one observer has noted.²² It has found favour in parts of the political establishment – politicians, media commentators, academics – oriented to Europe and modernity, while simultaneously provoking the ire of traditionalists who can still make their presence felt. Typical of a threatened orthodoxy, Bradshaw and his supporters regard revisionism as the new orthodoxy, but in fact a healthy pluralism pervades Irish historiography and public culture.²³

Revisionism is also post-national in Israel. Since the 1980s, so-called 'new historians' began shaking the Zionist foundation myth by showing that, contrary to official opinion, the Palestinians did not voluntarily leave their land for Jewish settlement in 1948. Israel, the

prominent 'new historian' Benny Morris has argued, cannot deny co-responsibility for the Palestinian refugee problem because its military violently expelled many of them. A generational struggle was clearly taking place as younger historians and social scientists challenged the sacred truths of older Israelis that they were peace-loving victims of Arab aggression. Interestingly, Morris rejects the label 'revisionist' not because of its denialist connotations, but because it implies the existence of a legitimate historical orthodoxy. What Israel had, he avers polemically, was not scholarship but publicly sponsored nationalist propaganda that cannot be dignified with a revision. Serious historical research had to start from scratch.²⁴

The evidence that the 'new historians' were able to muster for their conclusions soon had practical effects. School textbooks were altered to include the new explanation for the Palestinian flight, and the Israeli intelligentsia's push for peace negotiations was strengthened.²⁵ Predictably, their critics have labelled them 'post-Zionists' to suggest disloyalty, although Morris, for one, insists he is a committed Zionist. Much like Bradshaw in relation to Ireland, Zionists were dismayed that Jews could engage in an 'Israeli suicide drive', as one novelist put it despairingly.²⁶ One of them, Ephraim Karsh, published a book interestingly titled *Fabricating Israeli History: The 'New Historians'*, in which he scrutinised the new historians' footnotes, including those of Morris's landmark work, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949*.²⁷ Like Windschuttle, Karsh holds Edward Said's anti-imperialism (for Karsh this means anti-Zionism) responsible for politicising scholarship, as if problems in Israeli society were not stimulus enough for critical reflection.²⁸ Finding some archival errors, Karsh triumphantly claimed the new historian's scalp, but Morris's response showed that he had picked up only minor problems and missed the main points, systematically ignoring or glossing over facts that told against his argument. Ironically, Morris concludes by associating his critic with the dubious form of revisionism: 'Karsh resembles nothing so much as those Holocaust-denying historians who ignore all evidence and common sense in order to press an ideological point.'²⁹

If left-liberals were the revisionists in Ireland and Israel, in Germany and Japan they were conservative nationalists. The Federal Republic of

Germany is the classic example, and it has even been called the 'storm centre of "revisionism"'.³⁰ This is not surprising. Where else have the crimes committed by the nationals of a country been so heinous yet so freely debated for such a long time thereafter? The 'Historians' Dispute' (*Historikerstreit*), played out in newspapers and public affairs journals in the mid-1980s, has become well known around the world, thanks to the translation of its key texts and the extensive secondary literature it has generated. It began when the maverick historian Ernst Nolte published a newspaper article entitled 'Between Historical Legend and Revisionism' that expressed concern about the mythically evil status of the Nazi period in public consciousness. What really bothered Nolte was not that Nazism was unpopular but that the new left-liberal politics and historiography of the 1970s attributed the Nazi regime and the Holocaust to pathological national traditions. As a nationalist, the purpose of his self-conscious 'revision' was to rehabilitate these traditions by showing that historical guilt, or at least the cause of the Holocaust, was *located outside German national history*. In a system of cause and effect, Germany was simply a link in the chain of exterminatory politics that had infected Europe since the French Revolution. The Holocaust was a response to the threatened class-murder of the Bolsheviks. 'Auschwitz ... was the fear-borne reaction to the acts of annihilation that took place during the Russian Revolution', he averred famously.³¹

Nolte's plea for a revision was answered immediately by West Germany's most prominent anti-fascist philosopher, Jürgen Habermas. Discerning a neo-conservative backlash against the tentative consensus about the uniqueness of the Holocaust since the Christian Democratic (CDU) Kohl government took office in 1982, Habermas lashed out at 'apologetic tendencies' in politics and historical writing.³² As might be expected, he was roundly condemned by conservative historians and newspaper editors for enforcing 'moral taboos' and 'politicising scholarship', while left-liberal intellectuals rallied to Habermas's defence, mobilising clichés of their own. Conservatives, they said, were 'relativising' the Holocaust (by linking it to Bolshevik crimes), and rendering it 'harmless' (*Verharmlosung*).³³

By the late 1980s, it was clear that the left-liberals had won the day,

in part because liberal intellectuals, who had become alienated from the left during the 'red decade' between 1967 and 1977 (when terrorism and left-wing violence had plagued the country and university campuses), supported Habermas. Appalled by the nationalist drift of parts of German society, which reminded them of the bad days of hysterical anti-communism and illiberal clericalism of the 1950s, they affirmed the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The other reason for the defeat of retention of 'Holocaust consciousness' was the gradual realisation in the CDU, especially after the Bitburg debacle in 1985 when President Reagan and Kohl caused an international scandal by visiting a West German military cemetery containing graves of *Waffen SS* soldiers, that the country's international credibility depended on playing down its nationalist rhetoric.³⁴ Indeed, West Germany's rehabilitation depended on being seen to face the past honestly. Consequently, Kohl became a proponent of the Holocaust memorial in Berlin, an unthinkable proposition a decade earlier. Despite periodic challenge from the right, the Holocaust has become the centre of German state consciousness, which casts the country as an anti-genocidal polity.³⁵

Certainly, the same cannot be said of the crimes committed by Japan's military during the 1930s and 1940s, and for this reason Germany's reckoning with the past is often compared favourably with the Japanese one.³⁶ Indeed, the continuing international disquiet over Japan's handling of the war's legacy indicates that involvement of public authority in the country's memory politics is highly controversial.

Yet there are no easy answers. It is not true that, considered as a whole, the Japanese have made no effort to 'come to terms with their past', as is sometimes alleged.³⁷ Like the other countries considered here, Japan's politics of history needs to be understood in the context of competing factions in the intelligentsia. The complexity of the Japanese case stems from the difficulty of identifying an orthodoxy, a problem reflected in terminology. Denialist writers are called the 'official school' by left-liberal historians, yet are also known as revisionists, and they like to call themselves 'liberals'. The fog begins to lift when we consider the early post-war years of Japanese democracy. The United States imposed a pacifist constitution on the vanquished country, and educational reforms gave greater autonomy to teachers and

their union, who tended to the left and supported the new system. Similarly, many Marxists were now to be found among university historians who proffered an anti-military understanding of Japanese history. This new faction of the intelligentsia supported the Tokyo war crimes trials and viewed the Nanking Massacre as the culmination of Japanese military traditions of imperialism and racism.³⁸ The left was ensconced in the key institutions of cultural transmission at the outset of post-war Japan, while in West Germany it only made such advances after the 1960s.

For the conservative elites, whom the Americans permitted to regain power and retain the emperor system because of their worries about communist China and the Japanese left, the trials and the accompanying interpretation of Japanese history were anathema.³⁹ Since the 1950s, nationalist groups within the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and general population have sought to strengthen the ability of the Ministry of Education to 'screen' (i.e. censor) school textbooks in order to erase the critical elements of the pacifist perspective. Left-wing historians, especially the university historian Saburo Ienaga, have challenged such censorship in the courts, leading to celebrated legal battles. The censorship shows that facts are not value-free and that the language in which they are presented determines their meaning. Thus, where one of Ienaga's textbook drafts read, 'The Japanese army everywhere murdered inhabitants, burned out villages and violated women, inflicting immense harm to the lives, property and chastity of the Chinese', the Ministry ordered him to:

Delete references to 'violating women' and 'chastity'. The phenomenon of assault on women by troops is something that occurs commonly throughout the world, so to refer to this in relation to the Japanese army alone is unsuitable in terms of selectivity and sequence, as well as overemphasizing particular incidents.⁴⁰

This battle of perspectives indicates what sections of Japan's business, bureaucratic and political elites continue to believe, namely that Japan was a victim of the war it waged to liberate Asia from Western imperialism. For this reason, these sectional groups have had great difficulty dealing with the 'comfort women', the Nanking Massacre, the

notorious Unit 731 that conducted biological warfare and experiments, and the forced labour programs, all of which attest to systematic criminality by the revered military. Only in the 1990s have some women dared to come forward and demand reparation for their abuse.⁴¹

Yet the 1990s also saw a resurgence of nationalist activity. Many politicians and publicists, as well as a small number of historians, have consistently played down the 'Rape of Nanking'. It is either referred to as an 'incident' typical in wartime, or denied as a 'fabrication', as in Tanaka Masaaki's *The Fabrication of the 'Nanking Massacre'*.⁴² In another publication, *What Really Happened in Nanking: The Refutation of a Common Myth*, Masaaki attacked the Chinese-American author Iris Chang for 'engineering hatred of Japan and the Japanese in the hearts of Americans' in her 1997 book *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*. He proceeded to offer a forensic treatment of the documentation which dismissed photographs of Japanese soldiers beheading and torturing Chinese civilians as inventions and instead showed religious ceremonies and happy locals welcoming their liberators. 'These photographs', writes the author, 'prove that Japanese military personnel adhered to the *bushido* code by praying for the repose of the souls of the enemy dead. They should also negate the evil demagoguery that led the world to believe that Japanese soldiers murdered Chinese indiscriminately or orchestrated a Holocaust.'⁴³

How do we account for such crude polemics? An important factor is a change of government and public culture. In 1993, a change of government brought a new prime minister who conceded that Japan had waged an aggressive colonial war, and the Diet adopted a formal motion of regret. The state finally admitted that women had been compelled to work in 'comfort houses'.⁴⁴ This significant, albeit modest gesture toward the wartime victims of Japan provoked a vehement response from nationalists, who now regarded themselves as an embattled minority responsible for saving the country from self-destruction. Some members of the Diet formed associations in the name of a 'Bright Japan' and the 'Passing on of a Correct History', while new nationalist organisations sprang up among the conservative intelligentsia. Their articles receive extensive coverage in the popular press, including a

national daily newspaper.⁴⁵ These revisionists are called 'official' because they articulate the historical resentments of 'official Japan', which regards itself as constricted by a victor's justice and its 'anti-Japanese' view of history.

One group closely aligned with the establishment calls itself the 'Liberal School of History'. Trying to sound reasonable and mainstream, it polemicises against 'taboos' in the name of 'free discussion' and 'rational arguments', yet it has taboos of its own. When 'comfort women' appeared in junior high school textbooks in 1997, the Liberal School complained about 'the spiritual disintegration of the Japanese State'.⁴⁶ Furthermore the Liberal School's arguments display denialist traits. It insists that no government source exists to prove that Asian women were compelled to work as sex slaves, and that their testimony is unreliable because it is uncorroborated. As one commentator of Japanese revisionism noted:

this position is no different from that of the neo-Nazis who claim that the Holocaust did not occur on the grounds that there are no documents signed by Hitler ordering the extermination of the Jews. The danger of exclusive reliance on documentary sources with regard to these problems should be plain to anyone, since it is well known that the great majority of potentially damaging documents were destroyed in anticipation of the Allied occupation.⁴⁷

Likewise, the revisionists consider the Nanking Massacre to be a myth. Under no circumstances can the Japanese war campaign be compared to the Nazi one, they declare, despite the strong parallels in imperial aims, numbers of victims, racial ideology and resort to forced labour.⁴⁸

Although they have a high profile, these revisionists have not been able to impose themselves, at least not yet. While prime ministers may court the nationalist vote by visiting the Yakusuni military shrine where war criminals are buried, Ienaga was able to win his case against the Ministry of Education in 1997. And the new textbook written by the Liberal School, though approved by the Ministry of Education, has not been adopted by many school districts. Japanese scholars are undertaking serious research into the war and the crimes of the Japanese

military, and the government is not oblivious to its image abroad.⁴⁹ The struggle between revisionism and orthodoxy seems finely balanced.

Revisionism or Denial in Australia?

Where does Australia stand in this schema? Its experience resembles aspects of both the West German and Japanese experiences. As in West Germany, the left-liberal perspective only came to the fore in the 1970s. As in Japan, it is under serious threat from conservative imperialists who deny the national past contains much to be regretted. For them, it is an uplifting, even glorious story of progress shielded from the public by left-liberal historians who opportunistically purvey shameful untruths at taxpayers' expense.⁵⁰ Whether the Australian left-liberal intelligentsia can see off this national-conservative challenge remains to be seen.

Revisionism in Australia has arisen over controversies about national history since the 1970s. The post-war orthodoxy, the historian Bob Reece noted in 1976, was that Aborigines were peripheral to the dominant narrative of British expansion of the continent: 'The idea that has most influenced white Australians' attitudes to Aborigines is that they were dying out in accordance with some natural and inevitable process stemming from failure to adapt to European civilization.'⁵¹ The national past was seen from the Europeans' point of view. Reece himself belonged to a younger generation of historians who challenged this view and proposed an alternative, namely, taking seriously the indigenous perspective. 'These revisionist historians', as Bain Attwood and Stephen Foster noted recently, 'represented colonisation as a matter of invasion, depicted the frontier as a line between conflicting parties, regarded the conflict as war, treated the Aborigines' response as resistance, and explained the violence of the frontiersmen in terms of racism as well as other factors.'⁵²

These historians re-cast the moral drama of Australian history. No longer were Australians forging a 'New Britannia', rather they were making good the British abuse of Aborigines, non-Anglo immigrants and the environment.⁵³ Their labours have been effective. In the early 1990s, the Labor Prime Minister, Paul Keating, advocated reconciliation

with indigenous peoples on the basis of a left-liberal perspective of the national past, one strongly influenced by his speechwriter, the historian Don Watson. The High Court took much the same view in two key decisions on native title, *Mabo* (1992) and *Wik* (1996), based as they were on a generation of revisionist scholarship on frontier violence.⁵⁴

For conservatives, the institutional endorsement of an Australian history that for the first time gestured to the indigenous perspective represented a grave threat to a nation whose material success and moral probity they had invested with world-historical significance.⁵⁵ Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, these conservatives complained bitterly about the 'political correctness' of the Labor Party's shibboleths of multiculturalism and Aboriginal land rights, which appeared to criminalise the national past. These policies, they accused, were propounded illegitimately by 'elites' that brainwashed the public through left-liberal domination of the key institutions of cultural transmission: universities, schools, museums and the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC).⁵⁶

For this reason, members of the conservative intelligentsia regard themselves as beleaguered outsiders, having to rely on privately funded think-tanks and non-academic journals like *Quadrant* for research and publication support.⁵⁷ Since the Howard government came to power in 1996, the conservative intelligentsia has benefited from indirect state patronage and the increased sympathy of the print media.⁵⁸ Despite such support, however, 'black armband' history, as the left-liberal perspective is derisively called, did not disappear. On the contrary, the *Bringing them home* report on stolen Aboriginal children hit the headlines in 1997, prompting calls – backed by massive public demonstrations across Australia in 2000 – for an official apology to the victims. The formal 'reconciliation' process, initiated in 1991 after the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, culminated in a controversial 'Australian Reconciliation Convention' in 1997 at which the distance between the conservative government and left-liberals and indigenous leaders was readily apparent.⁵⁹

These developments, and subsequent talk of a treaty between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians, were met with paroxysms of sneering by conservatives, who fell upon any doubt about the

veracity of indigenous victim narratives with malicious alacrity. All this noise about Aboriginal issues, they snorted, was merely the expression of a self-loathing left-liberal elite parasitically ensconced in the nation's cultural institutions. Suddenly there was very little separating such conservatives and far right figures like Pauline Hanson and her One Nation party.⁶⁰

The conservatives' charge sheet having been written, they are abuzz with projects. One of them is to stack the ABC with members of the conservative intelligentsia, such as Ron Brunton, a former 'senior research fellow' at the Institute for Public Affairs (a right-wing think-tank), a columnist with the Murdoch-owned *Courier-Mail* and the most prominent opponent of the *Bringing them home* report.⁶¹ Another project is to transform the National Museum of Australia in Canberra, which, according to its most trenchant critic, Keith Windschuttle, is in thrall to a trendy postmodernism and postcolonialism that exaggerates frontier conflict and gives unwarranted space to the experience of minorities. Scandalously, it does not display the redeeming story of nation building.⁶² A forum rather than a temple, he appears to be saying, the museum is not performing its traditional sacred role of constructing the collective subject – the national 'us' – that visitors can behold and narcissistically identify as their origin.⁶³ It is no coincidence that Christopher Pearson, columnist for *The Australian*, editor of the conservative *Adelaide Review*, former speech-writer for John Howard and member of editorial board of the magazine, *Quadrant*, that published Windschuttle's screed, is the government appointee on the museum council that was instrumental in contriving a review of the museum's exhibits by a select group of conservatives that includes no historians.⁶⁴

Windschuttle clearly has clout. Each month, the Prime Minister and his cabinet rush out and buy *Quadrant* to see what new historical scandal he claims to have exposed.⁶⁵ Not for nothing did one journalist quip that, 'If Keith Windschuttle hadn't existed, John Howard would have been sorely tempted to invent him. He's the historian the Prime Minister has been searching for all these years, someone with the scissors to snip though the black armband which Howard believes has cast a pall over Australia's past, present and future.'⁶⁶ He has been given

a platform by the country's only daily broadsheet, *The Australian*, forcing historians to reply immediately in public lest his claims of fraudulent research go unanswered. The doyen of conservative historians, Geoffrey Blainey, has blessed him, gushing of his book that it 'will ultimately be recognised as one of the most important and devastating written on Australian history in recent decades.'⁶⁷ Even school teachers have been convinced by Windschuttle's arguments.⁶⁸ But are they playing with fire? Is he like the Japanese deniers, or indeed the Holocaust deniers, in the sense of sharing their method? Certainly, he rejects the parallel.⁶⁹ Only by comparing his work with the approach of these groups can we answer this controversial question.

The Denialist Syndrome

Holocaust denial has emerged from the shadows of the cyberworld into the glare of public scrutiny because of the celebrated libel trial in London involving one of its most famous proponents, David Irving. In the late 1990s, he sued the American academic Deborah Lipstadt for calling him a Holocaust denier in her book *Denying the Holocaust*.⁷⁰ She and her publisher mounted a successful defence by assembling a formidable team of expert witnesses, mostly professional historians, who could show that Irving was an anti-Semite and not an 'objective historian'. The case generated enormous press, and at least five books on the trial and related issues have been published since it ended in 2000.⁷¹ Yet Holocaust negationism, as denial is sometimes called, is an unusual instance of revisionism because most of its proponents are not defending their own nation or tradition. In France, for example, most of the deniers come from the anti-Zionist left.⁷² If we consider the Japanese and Turkish repression of their respective pasts, a pernicious denialist syndrome becomes apparent. It comprises the following elements.

Denialists are documentary positivists in a fundamentalist sense. They claim that a factual statement can be authenticated as true only if backed up by a circumscribed category of documents. Direct evidence like official correspondence and eyewitness accounts are good sources of evidence, but indirect ones like hearsay are not. This sounds reasonable

enough until the conclusions to which this limitation leads become apparent. Holocaust deniers cast doubt on the existence of gas chambers at Auschwitz because no direct evidence exists to attest to their construction and use for this purpose. Survivor testimony is rejected because it is hearsay; after all, the victims perished, and survivors cannot claim they ever saw them operating. Indeed, survivors who have appeared as trial witnesses have been forced to concede that they only heard about the gas chambers from kapos and camp rumour.⁷³ Similarly, the oral testimony of 'comfort women' is rejected by Japanese denialists because it is difficult to corroborate with documents, just as the anti-Dreyfusards spurned such testimony that exculpated Dreyfus. Irving denies that six million Jews were killed because documents cannot be adduced to attest to each death. The figure is a guesstimate, he says, based on a comparison between pre-war and post-war Jewish populations and is therefore not a documented historical fact.⁷⁴ Robert Faurisson, a prominent French Holocaust denier, typifies their narrow, forensic approach when he insists that if the holes in the roof of the now-ruined chambers through which the poison was poured cannot be identified, the case for gassing collapses: 'no holes, no Holocaust'. Revisionism, he insists, simply demands documentary proof. It is a 'matter of method and not an ideology'.⁷⁵ If so, as a commentator on the Irving trial remarked, its method is a 'crazed positivism'.⁷⁶

Needless to say, professional historians reject this standard of proof. Instead, they rely on the 'convergence of evidence', that is, inferences made on the basis of indirect sources. If a sufficient number of them point in the same direction, namely the existence of gas chambers, historians conclude that we may reasonably infer their existence. In this case, such evidence includes testimonies, confessions and memoirs, as well as architectural plans.⁷⁷ Certainly, the trial judge thought that Irving was not operating according to this orthodox method because he had 'misstated historical evidence; adopted positions which run counter to the weight of the evidence; given credence to unreliable evidence and disregarded or dismissed credible evidence'.⁷⁸

The fetishisation of direct evidence to underwrite every historical conclusion is the basis of denialists' peculiar self-understanding as authentic historians; indeed, as the only serious ones. As in Turkey and

Japan, they conduct research and observe the conventions of scholarship (footnotes and so on). Holocaust deniers have established their own pseudo-professional organ, the *Journal of Historical Review*.⁷⁹ They spurn professional historians as creatures of a smug club whose members habitually cite one another's books without doing sufficient legwork in the archives. Only his research is reliable, insists Irving, because he does not rely on that of his competitors who produce politically driven moralism. Hitler's bad reputation is the product of 'inter-historian incest', he charges, as each historian copied the judgements of his or her predecessors, not bothering to consult the original documents: 'Real History is what we find in the archives.' Because he is merely a conduit for 'the facts', allowing them to speak for themselves, Irving, with apparent sincerity, claimed in 1993 not to

have any kind of political agenda, and really, it's rather defamatory for people to suggest that I do have an agenda. The agenda I have, I suppose, is, all right, I admit it, I like seeing the other historians with egg on their face. And they're getting a lot of egg on their face now, because I'm challenging them to produce the evidence for what they've been saying for fifty years.⁸⁰

As deniers think they have uncovered the truth concealed by corrupt elites, they mount crusades to ensure its proclamation to the people. And this truth, of which they are the sole custodians, will save the nation or cause that they believe plays a redemptive role in world history. As might be expected, there is a whiff of paranoia and a proclivity to believe in conspiracy theories in the denialist mentality.

Denialists customarily uncover minor flaws in the claims of genocide and then claim that the entire case fails.⁸¹ As one of the expert witnesses for Lipstadt's defence, Richard J. Evans, noted, 'Irving's technique was to present ... minor mistakes and propaganda legends at Nuremberg while ignoring the overwhelming mass of evidence on major matters of fact, using the former to discredit the latter.'⁸² Or as Hugh Trevor-Roper similarly observed:

He seizes on a small but dubious particle of 'evidence'; builds up on it, by private interpretation, a large general conclusion; and then over-

looks or re-interprets the more substantial evidence and probability against it. Since this defective method is invariably used to excuse Hitler or the Nazis and to damage their opponents, we may reasonably speak of a consistent bias, unconsciously distorting the evidence.⁸³

Denialists offer preposterous counter-explanations or redefine words and contexts to render harmless the charge of genocide. Holocaust deniers, for example, claim the gas chambers at Auschwitz were in fact air-raid shelters for the SS, and that most Jews died of disease.⁸⁴ Japanese denialists, by contrast, discount the Nanking Massacre by defining massacre narrowly as 'the unlawful, premeditated, methodological killing of large numbers of innocent people'. Since the casualties in Nanking were overwhelmingly combatants or combat-related, it could not have been a massacre.⁸⁵ The Turkish establishment places blame for Armenian deaths on ideological fanatics, bandits or ignorant peasants. True, the Christian minority was being re-settled during the crisis of the First World War, it admits, but the casualties were a regrettable side-effect, and were by no means calculated. There was no genocidal plan, and therefore no genocide.⁸⁶

Because of their fanatical commitment to their 'truth', denialists cannot accept sources that compromise it. Consequently, they define counter-evidence in such a way as to render their propositions unfalsifiable. For example, in response to a massive new book on Auschwitz and its gas chambers that relies on much oral testimony, Samuel Crowell, in the *Journal of Historical Review*, retorted that:

the revisionist position that testimony may be doubted, not only because of the social and judicial pressures surrounding such testimony, but also because the gassing claims themselves originated in an atmosphere of anonymous rumour which makes all testimony potentially derivative, is irrefutable.⁸⁷

Deniers are not necessarily disreputable cranks. In Turkey, the state itself is denialist, as are many members of the Japanese establishment. For a long time, Irving was taken seriously as a historian, publishing with commercial presses and receiving praise for his tireless archival efforts.

Finally, deniers pick on events in isolation and ignore the broader context. What was the Japanese army doing in China in the first place? Why were Armenians being deported in 1915 at all? Why were Jews in the camps to begin with? By focussing on iconic episodes, like the gas chambers, and ignoring the enabling conditions, deniers implicitly endorse the general policies of the perpetrators. They are not mounting scholarly investigations but prowling around for a 'scoop' with which to undermine the accusation of genocide.

Is Windschuttle a Denier?

How does Keith Windschuttle's work appear in light of this syndrome? Is he a denier or the upholder of those scholarly standards that university historians have neglected in pursuing their supposedly dubious ideological goals? This is a grave question. Reputations are at stake. It will not do to smear Windschuttle as he has smeared historians with his insinuations that they are cheats who invent sources. Facile parallels should be avoided. It is not decisive, for example, that the titles of the publications of denialists and of Windschuttle are so similar ('The Fabrication of X', 'The Myth of Y'). Likewise, his proclivity to sue critics, as Irving does, is not a reliable indicator. That he vigorously opposes the left-liberal intelligentsia is not a salient consideration either. As we have seen, conservatives can attack this group without resorting to denial. Nor is Windschuttle an anti-Semite. There is no evidence to suggest he doubts the veracity of the Holocaust, Armenian genocide or Japanese war crimes. But the question is whether he denies frontier violence in Australia in the same way as these other events are denied. Accordingly, we must ask whether the formal structure of his argumentation fits the denialist syndrome sketched out above. An examination reveals sufficient troubling parallels that Windschuttle should clarify where he stands in relation to each of its points.

Typical of denialism is Windschuttle's accusation that the history profession conspires to conceal a great truth, central to the welfare of humanity, of which he is the anointed prophet. World history is simple: it consists of the Manichaeian struggle between good and evil. The truth in this case is not German culture, the Turkish state or Japanese destiny,

but Western, above all, British civilisation: as the inheritor of 'Roman law, government, culture, and religion' that guarantees intellectual and political freedom, Windshuttle thinks its spread throughout the world drives historical progress. And the discipline of history is one of its central features, guaranteeing an open society and development of civilisation by challenging myths and legends.⁸⁸

This progress, he is convinced, is threatened by an alternative Western tradition that, born of alienation, yearns for the romantic, idealises the primitive and results in the revolutionary utopianism of totalitarian dictatorships.⁸⁹ Leftist intellectuals now articulate this counter-tradition by pouring scorn on imperialism and attributing all contemporary ills to Western civilisation. They 'adopt a politically correct stance against their own society', yet are merely instrumentalising indigenous deaths to gain the moral high ground in the culture wars, 'a transparently insincere political gesture'.⁹⁰ Most recently, he warns that this evil irrationalism has manifested itself in postmodernism and policies of self-determination for Aborigines.⁹¹ For these self-loathing elites, 'Western superiority, though patently obvious to everyone, has become a truth that must not be spoken.'⁹²

Like deniers everywhere, Windschuttle proposes to rescue the truth by uncovering 'the facts'. Accordingly, he professes no ideological intent. 'My political agenda', he told a journalist in terms strikingly similar to Irving, 'is that I think history has been ruined by political agendas ... I'm trying to find out the truth of the matter ... My self is really irrelevant in this.'⁹³ At the same time, he is well aware of the political stakes in the culture wars, declaring, 'It's about the foundation of Australia – whether it was a legitimate foundation or whether it was just an imperialist invasion in which they rode roughshod over the Aborigines.'⁹⁴ Plainly he thinks the foundation was legitimate because the British colonisation 'brought the cultural inheritance of Rome and its successors to this continent'.⁹⁵ There is an obvious contradiction here between claims of neutrality and ardent partisanship. He can only avoid it by using the same evidentiary criteria and practices – crazed positivism – as deniers. Let us see how.

To begin with, he entertains the same view of sources as deniers, favouring the fundamentalist use of documents and abjuring evidential

convergence. Consequently, where no government-authorized documents of eyewitnesses can be adduced, we cannot infer that a massacre or violent confrontation took place. And where such evidence does exist, we must take the death toll noted in such documents rather than in indirect sources of evidence, despite the obvious problem of using the testimony of perpetrators. A still more serious problem in Windschuttle's method of argument, however, is his willingness to claim that European diseases accounted for most indigenous deaths, although little documentary evidence exists of the sort he demands in relation to violence. This inconsistency is telling.

Like deniers, he also rejects *a priori* any material that tells against his case, in this instance the indirect testimony of missionaries in particular. Their voices are discredited on the grounds that they habitually exaggerated frontier violence so they could mount a case for government assistance to operate missions on which to 'protect' the Aborigines. In this way, Windschuttle continues, the missionaries, rather than British racism, are responsible for the adjustment difficulties of indigenous people today: their segregationist policies prevented natural integration into Australian civilisation. The tension between advocating such integration last century and ascribing indigenous fatalities to European disease is obvious.⁹⁶

This attribution of blame to the rival, evil counter-tradition of the West is typical of another denialist problem, namely 'splitting'. It pervades Windschuttle's writing and mires him in contradictions. The blame for post-colonial ethnic messes, for example, is pushed on to the critics of imperialism (do-gooders like the missionaries) who forced European states to pull out before they had sorted out the natives. 'Indeed, the uncivilized conditions in which many people in the old imperial realm now live is evidence that the world would be a better place today if some parts of it were still ruled by the British Empire!'⁹⁷ Yet, in another article, he pointed to these Western critics of imperialism to show that European civilisation was complex and should not be rejected out of hand. Suddenly, the anti-imperialists were the moral beacons of Western civilisation. But because he has to concede that they could not prevent the European powers from carving up Africa in the late nineteenth century, he must contrive an escape route from the

corner into which he has painted himself. Ingeniously, he concludes that the British imperialists were driven by imported Hegelian philosophy – a manifestation of the evil counter-tradition – thereby rescuing British traditions from complicity in unjustifiable chauvinism!⁹⁸

What is more, Windschuttle hopes to show how the frontier was an essentially peaceful place of British law and order by engaging in four sleights of hand. To begin with, by taking the same episodic and forensic approach as deniers, he diverts attention from the larger colonial context. Violence, on those few occasions it occurred, he claims, was incidental rather than intrinsic to the European settlement of the continent. Its causes were local not systemic.⁹⁹ But Windschuttle can only advance this fanciful idea by ignoring the proposition that violence was an inherent aspect of the colonial encounter, and that its escalation was a potential rooted in the nature of its structure: because the settlers did not recognise native title and took the land without negotiation or compensation, Aborigines were bound to resist, and in turn sometimes provoke exterminatory reprisals by the settlers, who lobbied the authorities to eliminate the threat.¹⁰⁰

Second, he hopes to pour cold water on the proposition that massacres were widespread, but ends up adopting the style of the Japanese deniers by redefining the concept of massacres into meaninglessness. He believes that documented killings of Aborigines by state troopers could not have been massacres because Aborigines were criminals and the British were conducting authorised arrests, which they resisted.¹⁰¹

Third, Windschuttle mis-states the views of historians regarding 'racial' conflict. He has them claim that many large-scale massacres typified frontier relations, when in fact they have written of pervasive but small-scale violence. His agenda is clear. On the one hand, he wants to highlight that colonial authorities were not complicit in massacres on the rare occasions when they occurred. On the other, he wants to ignore the pervasive settler racism but is prepared to concede the killing of Aborigines in 'ones and twos'.¹⁰² To ask after the reasons for these phenomena could force him to concede the exterminatory violence inherent in the colonial encounter.

No example of the various straw men he sets up is more flagrant than his recent declaration that, 'For some reason, the academic

historians who dominate this field want to portray their own country as the moral equivalent of Hitler's Germany or Stalin's Russia.'¹⁰³ In fact, no historian has advanced such an absurd thesis. To be sure, some journalists and popular writers have indulged in hyperbole, but they have been criticised by historians for doing so.¹⁰⁴ Windschuttle is saying nothing new yet claims to have uncovered a sinister plot like a tabloid reporter on the hunt for sensation. Similarly, he insists that an 'orthodoxy' holds the British committed a genocide upon the Tasmanian Aborigines, conveniently ignoring the fact that Henry Reynolds and this author – representatives of this orthodoxy, in his view – argued against this notion several years ago.¹⁰⁵ What is more, the 'black armband' view of history is not an orthodoxy at all. Considerable pluralism characterises the history profession, as Bain Attwood has shown. Even Gerard Henderson agrees.¹⁰⁶

Fourth, as the denialists do in the German, Turkish and Japanese contexts, Windschuttle answers the question of the legitimacy of indigenous resistance to such police actions by presuming the justice of the British presence in Australia and identifying openly with them. The settlers in Tasmania, whom Windschuttle has to admit murdered blacks, were merely defending themselves from the Aborigines, whom he criminalises:

In every case, even the hardest of attitudes was generated solely by the desire to stop the blacks from assaulting and murdering whites. They would have been a peculiar people had they not felt the urge to retaliate. Despite the restraints of their culture and religion, and the admonishment of their government, the settlers of Van Diemen's Land were only human.¹⁰⁷

This is precisely the cycle of escalation built into the structure of colonial relations to which historians have pointed and Windschuttle has chosen to ignore because it compromises the decency he thinks characterises the colonisation project. Were he to recognise this point, of course, he would have to acknowledge that Aborigines were 'only human' too, and that their resistance could not be put down to the primitive instincts of a people who had to make way for a superior culture.

If Windschuttle wants to move beyond the dramatisation of history in terms of victims and perpetrators, he has done a very poor job. This could be a classic case of what psychoanalysts call 'transference', that is, adopting the perspective of the historical figure or cause to which one has formed a libidinal attachment. Good historians work through such inevitable and highly charged emotional investments by critical self-reflection, and the sure sign of success is the development of an *independent viewpoint*, that is, a viewpoint not that of any of the historical agents. Where historians allow themselves to become mouthpieces of a favoured protagonist, they often 'act out' their own emotional lives.¹⁰⁸ It makes for bad history, or worse.

The problem of perspective plagues Windschuttle's work more generally. Now he thinks that the great moral drama of Australian history, which has indeed become widespread since the 1970s, should be rejected because Aborigines, and indeed all minorities, were not nation-builders like great white men.¹⁰⁹ He himself accepted this drama as the central story of Australian history as late as the mid-1990s but has since reverted to the colonial orthodoxy that, in his own words, 'confined Aborigines to the first few pages of their general surveys ... and allowed them to disappear'.¹¹⁰ Likewise, he has rejected any methodological sophistication he may have once embraced. Relentlessly positivist as his book *The Killing of History* is, it at least recognised that the historian's 'artistry' as a writer allows 'us to see things from a new, unexpected and illuminating perspective'. Facts do not speak for themselves after all. The most outstanding example of artistry for him was C. D. Rowley's *The Destruction of Aboriginal Society*, which showed that 'what most people had assumed to have been small, isolated outbreaks of violence against blacks, coupled with some sporadic, pathetic gestures at welfare, actually formed a great unbroken arch of systematic brutality, dispossession and incarceration stretching from the late eighteenth to the twentieth century'.¹¹¹

Although Windschuttle considered Rowley's achievement to be the fruit of the traditional narrative mode of historical writing, it was also one that took seriously the indigenous perspective. But now, in the face of all arguments to the contrary, he thinks he can divest himself of *any* perspective and write from a culturally neutral standpoint and thereby

show, rather than advocate, the superiority of Western civilisation. And yet all he has done is make a loaded choice to redeem the settler perspective and demonise that of the indigenous people because he presumes the justice of the former's cause. This methodological confusion, as naive as it is morally questionable, is the basis of his much-vaunted 'counter-history' of Australian settlement.

So far, Windschuttle has not proposed ridiculous counter-arguments to explain the catastrophic decline of the indigenous population. Disease is the main culprit, he insists, as indeed many historians have before him. But there are worrying signs when he proposes, before having conducted the research, that we should not expect large Aboriginal death tolls on mainland Australia because the British colonies 'were civilised societies governed by both morality and laws that forbade the killing of the innocent'.¹¹² It appears as if he knows the answer before visiting the archives.

Given these parallels between the denialist syndrome and Windschuttle's approach, it is not surprising that many historians suspect he is not playing by scholarly rules. Of course, he thinks he is faithful to the facts while his opponents are in thrall to a 'paradigm' of frontier violence in light of which any evidence is perverted to fit the desired conclusion. *They* are like David Irving, he would retort, not me. Where Windschuttle has uncovered unwarranted inferences or idle speculation, he has rendered a service, as indeed Irving did with the documents he dug up in obscure places. But his blanket rejection of virtually all sources that point to frontier violence indicates that he shares the deniers' dismissal of the convergence-of-evidence method shared by historians around the world.

So is Windschuttle a denier? The signs are not good. Once a fanatical communist, he has radicalised to the right in the past decade, stunning former friends with the asperity of his censure and his touching faith in the white civilising mission. Will he keep going? It all depends on how he responds to this book. One of the hallmarks of deniers is their refusal to enter into serious dialogue with historians, picking out as they do easily dismissed criticisms and ignoring the telling ones. Windschuttle can prove his seriousness of purpose by addressing *each* of the responses to his work. Henry Reynolds and Lyndall Ryan have

amended their accounts in light of his valid criticisms. Is he prepared to address the specific criticisms of his?

Some may note that my challenge is futile, because if Windshuttle suffers from the denialist syndrome then he will not be able to reply rationally. For such people cast themselves as actors in a cosmic drama between good and evil, and thus automatically spurn what the agents of error – those postmodern relativists and postcolonial anti-imperialists – the university historians, can teach them. But while the paranoid are impervious to reason, we must hope that Windshuttle is true to his word about rational inquiry. Historical scholarship and Aboriginal history are too valuable to be reduced to the culture wars that he and his ilk want to wage. The answer to the question of whether he is a denier is in his hands.

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 45. *Ibid*, pp. 56f.
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 49. Daqing Yang, 'Convergence or Divergence? Recent Historical Writings on the Rape of Nanjing', *American Historical Review*, 104: 3, 1999, pp. 842–865.
 50. Here I disagree with Colin Tatz who thinks Australia resembles Turkey in its government-sponsored denial of the Armenian genocide: Tatz, 'Why Denialists Deny', in Colin Tatz et al, *Genocide Perspectives II*, Sydney, 2003, pp. 267–84.
 51. R. H. W. Reece, 'The Aborigines in Australian Historiography', in John A. Moses (ed.), *Historical Disciplines and Culture in Australasia*, St. Lucia: University of Queensland Press, 1979, pp. 253–55.
 52. B. Attwood and S. G. Foster, 'Introduction', in Attwood and Foster (ed.), *Frontier Conflict: The Australian Experience*, Canberra, National Museum of Australia, 2003, pp. 1–30. It should be noted that Reece expressed reservations about this revisionism from the beginning. A good survey of the literature regarding revisionism and its critics is B. Attwood, 'Aboriginal History', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 41, 1995, pp. 33–47.
 53. Manning Clark, 'The Beginning of Wisdom', *Time Australia*, 25/1/1988, pp. 12–15.
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 55. Geoffrey Blainey and John Howard, for example, insist that Australia's democracy is virtually unique in its longevity and beneficence: Blainey, 'Drawing Up a Balance-Sheet of our History', *Quadrant*, July–August 1993, pp. 10–15; Howard, 'Confront our Past, yes, but let's not be consumed by it', *The Australian*, 19/11/1996). See also Claudio Veliz, 'History as Alibi', *Quadrant*, April 2003, pp. 21–24.
 56. See, for example, the editorials of P. P. McGuinness in *Quadrant* since the late 1996.

- An excellent analysis of this nationalist worrying is Ghassan Hage, *White Nation: Fantasies of White Supremacy in a Multicultural Society*, Sydney, Pluto Press, 1998.
57. For a sober reading of these years, see Robert Manne, *The Way We Live Now: The Controversies of the Nineties*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 1998; idem, *The Barren Years: John Howard and Australian Political Culture*, Melbourne, Text Publishing, 2001.
 58. The membership of the quaintly named Bennelong Society includes former conservative government ministers of Aboriginal Affairs, Peter Howson (1971–72) and John Herron (1996–2001): see www.bennelong.com.au. It is no coincidence that prominent newspaper conservative columnists Christopher Pearson (*The Australian*), Miranda Devine (*The Sydney Morning Herald*) and Imre Salusinszky (*The Australian*) are on the editorial board of *Quadrant*.
 59. For the Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation and related Reconciliation Australia, see www.reconciliation.org.au and www.reconciliationaustralia.org.au.
 60. Typical, once again, were the *Quadrant* editorials and newspaper columns of McGuinness. See the dissection of the arguments by Robert Manne, 'In Denial: the Stolen Generations and the Right', *Quarterly Essay* 1, Melbourne, Black Inc., 2001.
 61. Cosimar Marriner, 'Anthropologist on ABC Board', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3–4/5/2003, p. 4. Brunton's criticisms of the report, predictably enough, were published in *Quadrant* and on the IPA website: 'Shame about the Aborigines', *Quadrant*, May 1997, pp. 36–9; idem, 'Genocide, the "Stolen Generations", and the "Unconceived Generations"', *Quadrant*, May 1998; idem, 'Justice O'Loughlin and Bringing them Home: A Challenge to the Faith', *Quadrant*, December 2000, pp. 37–42; idem, 'Correcting the False Scholarship Syndrome', *Institute for Public Affairs*: www.ipa.org.au/Reply/falsescholar.html.
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 63. For the function of myths of national origins, see Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, New York, Harper & Row, 1963, pp. 21–53.
 64. Gerard Henderson, 'Over the Top in the Culture Wars', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 14/1/2003.
 65. In fact, in 2003 the Prime Minister awarded him a 'Centenary of Federation' medal for his services to history: Jane Cadzow, 'Who's right now, then?', *Good Weekend*, 17/5/2003, p. 18.
 66. Andrew Stevenson, 'A Voice from the Frontier', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 'Spectrum' Supplement, 22/9/2001.
 67. Geoffrey Blainey, 'Undermining a Bloody Myth', *The Australian*, 14/4/2003, p. 9.
 68. Bernard Lane, 'Teaching Mr. Windschuttle', *The Weekend Australian*, 10–11/5/2003, p. 24.
 69. Keith Windschuttle, 'The Fabrication of Aboriginal history', *The New Criterion*, 20:1, September 2001.
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 71. Eva Menasse, *Der Holocaust vor Gericht*, Berlin, Siedler Verlag, 2000; D. D. Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, New York and London, W. W. Norton, 2001; Richard J. Evans, *Telling Lies about Hitler: History, the Holocaust and the David Irving Trial*, London, Verso, 2002; Robert Jan van Pelt, *The Case for Auschwitz: Evidence from the Irving Trial*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002; Peter Longerich, *The Unwritten Order: Hitler's Role in the Final Solution*, London: Tempus, 2003.
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 73. Lawrence Douglas, *The Memory of Judgement: Making Law and History in the Trials of the Holocaust*, New Haven and London, Yale University Press, 2000, ch. 9; Guttenplan, *The Holocaust on Trial*, pp. 158, 176.
 74. Evans, *Telling Lies about Hitler*, p. 126.
 75. Robert Faurisson, 'Impact and Future of Holocaust Revisionism', *Journal of Historical Review*, 19:1 at www.ihr.org/jhr/v19/v19n1p-2_Faurisson.html.
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