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The popularity of Fujioka Nobukatsu's books and the neo-nationalist historical revisionism they represent should not simply be analyzed as the return of the old rightwing in Japan. Reacting to the threats seemingly posed by various Others—a rising Asia, illegal foreigners in Japan, women, an increasingly “alien” youth culture—Fujioka and his followers have wielded a variety of myths and popular narratives about Japan and Japanese history to make their media-publicized case to reconstruct the Japanese body politic on the basis of a “healthy nationalism.” This article shows that it is in the way such different texts as Fujioka's books and Iwai Shunji's popular film, *Swallowtail Butterfly*, commonly participate in a consumption of the nation linked to an erasure of the Other that one can find something as equally serious as a revival of the oldtime right: what the author calls a “consumerist nationalism.”

by Aaron Gerow

History and the National Melodrama

When I first spotted a copy of *Kyokasho ga oshienai rekishi* (History not taught in textbooks) prominently displayed in a bookstore, I supposed that this work written by Fujioka Nobukatsu and the Liberal Historiography Study Group was a critique of the Ministry of Education's textbook examination system.¹ I was thus surprised to find that this best-selling book is actually a collection of “feel-good” narratives about “great” men and women in modern Japanese history. Existing textbooks, the book assumes, “bad-mouth” Japan, promoting a history of “self-abuse” which, as Fujioka baldly states in the introduction, “originates in the interests of foreign nations.”² History education, Fujioka argues, must benefit the Japanese state and should make Japanese “proud” of their nation again.

It is certainly possible to counter this rose-colored nationalist history by citing facts it ignores or by correcting its numerous errors. The title itself and the presumption that Japanese

history textbooks are defined by a “self-abusive” view of Japan seems to warrant this. Anyone familiar with Ienaga Saburo's court case, however, is aware that the Ministry of Education has in the past consistently opposed including any discussion of Japanese war atrocities in school texts. The very assertion that the antiseptically cleansed and excised school books have failed to present Japan in a positive light is at best disingenuous and at worst a fabrication. It is the patent absurdity of such a claim, however, that in a sense makes it immune to positivistic counter-argument since it is, from the start, not an assertion of fact but an evocation of certain myths and popular narratives.

Consider the title of Fujioka's book in relation to its packaging. Next to the title, the largest lettering on the front is the book band (*obi*), which proclaims, “We really didn't know this country well. Seventy-eight stories we want to engrave into the minds of Japanese.”³ What is interesting about both of these phrases is that, since their subjects are left unstated in the original Japanese, they could contextually just as possibly be “I” or “we” and refer equally to the readers or the authors. The first sentence most likely designates the readers and the second the authors, but the shift of subject within a general ambiguity of subjectivity helps construct (one could say “interpellate”) a community between author and reader conducive to the book's attempt to reconstruct a national subject (wherein “I” and “we” are inseparable: “we Japanese”). The book band thus invokes a certain linguistically generated communal/national emotion.

The evocation of national community is further enhanced in the black and white photo framed in red that dominates the cover (see p. 31). It is an old photograph (the era is unclear) of a

* Portions of this essay were originally published on the H-Japan internet discussion list on 20 February 1997, as a commentary on an earlier version of Nakamura Masanori's article (above). At that time, it benefited from a considerable number of comments and criticisms, including ones from Abe Markus Nornes, Laura Hein, and Mark Selden.

I also was greatly helped by my colleagues in the WINC (Workshop in Critical Theory) study group, particularly Ukai Tetsu, Narita Ryuichi, and Ouchi Hirokazu, as well as by two anonymous readers of my second draft. The positions expressed herein are ultimately my own, but I owe all of these individuals deep thanks.

young woman with a sleeping baby strapped onto her back. The woman could be the mother, but given her age, more likely an older sister or nursemaid. Maybe hers is the history that has not been told—that of women (there is a section in the book on “great” women)—or perhaps of the common people. Yet her face does not accusingly tell a narrative of oppression and neglect; she does not look the victim. Her visage is remarkably calm and self-assured, the image of a poor but hard-working woman, the proud figure whose story must be the one weaving its way into the hearts of the Japanese. The three sequels to this, the first volume, all feature old photographs of boys or men, all significant in both their innocence and nationalist self-confidence (one shows a proud young man with a Japanese flag).

The title, however, tells us that these photographs are not simply an evocation of innocence: these figures are supposedly untaught, unknown people, who were placed on the back shelves of the historical archive and then forgotten. Perhaps Fujioka promises his readers a return to innocence, but the rhetoric of this consumer product’s packaging implies that the innocence of these figures is significant only to the degree that it has been lost and suppressed from the pages of school textbooks. While they don’t look like victims, perhaps it is their innocence itself that was sacrificed during the interval between when the photo was snapped and today. One would suppose that the subsequent loss of innocence was a result of Japan’s modern history of war, but the argument of the book lays the blame on current methods of teaching and narrating history and on the authorities that control those methods. It does so by turning the title phrase, which could equally be a leftist accusation against a militaristic state, which did not teach past truths in its approved textbooks, into indignation over a weak democratic system that ignores the good heroes of modern Japan.

The packaging of Fujioka’s book engages us in narratives that are not reducible to the book’s contents. It is significant, for instance, that it is a woman with a child who graces the cover of the initial volume, and not only because it perhaps provides a virginal counterpart to the comfort women who are elided inside. Looking at her face, I was reminded of the melodramatic heroines of 1950s’ *hahamono*, the Japanese film genre that focuses on the unrecognized sacrifices of mothers. That genre, one can argue, was central in the postwar construction on a popular level of the myth of victimization that reconfigured a war of aggression as one in which it was the Japanese who suffered.⁴ While the girl in the photo may not be the child’s mother and she is far younger than the middle-aged heroines of those films, that only gives her the same desexualized status as these, usually widowed, women who devoted their lives to their children, rather than to fulfilling their own desires. All bear a purity of heart that is overruled by forces beyond their control and we, as readers/viewers, are meant to identify with their narrative of suffering.

Fujioka’s book ties into such victimization narratives as the *hahamono* through the structures of reading and the pleasure it invites rather than through its content. Each tale reads like a film narrative designed to jerk a tear or two or lift the spirits of the audience, encouraging identification between subject, reader, and author, such that the ultimate victims of this historical silence about “great Japanese” become the Japanese people themselves. That is why this is not a work that simply wishes to make its readers proud they are Japanese; that would make it no different than the hagiographic biographies of illustrious Japanese one

finds in any school library in Japan. Its power lies in the assertion that these stories are supposedly repressed by educational and state institutions, marked as taboo for children by bureaucratic authorities. The pleasure of reading them, then, lies in both the thrill of breaking taboos, flaunting a feigned oppositionality, and in identifying with these role models—not just because they are great, but because they have suffered by being rendered silent. As with the pleasure of watching melodrama,⁵ the enjoyment is fundamentally masochistic, the delight in making oneself the victim of injustice so as to justify one’s own existence. It is revealing that Fujioka’s favorite epithet for his opponents is the charge that they are masochists.

Kyokasho ga oshienai rekishi is thus as much concerned with narratives of victimization and melodrama as it is with an evaluation of historical facts. As such, it relies on certain desires and mythical patterns that are impervious to positivist counter-argument and that can best be explained only by analyzing the book as a cultural, discursive, or even literary text, one that intersects with a variety of other texts, from the historical to the fictional, from the printed to the televisual. Only then can we see how the new textbook revisionism operates as a broad narrative structure that creates and in turn is created by certain consumerist desires molded by contemporary historical conjuncture.

National Threats in the Post-Cold War World

As a manifestation of the narrative of victimization, the textbook revisionists rely on broad-based Japanese perceptions of both real and less-real victimizers. While the United States is still evoked as an oppressor, Fujioka himself refrains from criticism of the United States and the U.S.-Japan Security Treaty. More prominent in his rhetoric and that of his colleagues is the potential threat that other Asian nations pose.⁶ One sees frequent warnings about the economic rise of Asia, the strengthening of the Chinese state as an international player, and Chinese and Korean aspirations with regard to islands that Japan also claims. Revisionists make arguments such as, “Why must we teach the view of history that Chinese have?” (i.e., of the Nanjing massacre)—as if to teach such history would render Japan “weak,” in effect betraying the nation in a confrontation with China. Although in objective terms the rest of Asia cannot now rival Japan’s economic strength, Japan’s prolonged post-bubble economic slump (even if it is largely due to domestic factors) has bred an insecurity that inspires a search for external villains in



Cover of *Kyokasho ga oshienai rekishi* (History not taught in textbooks). Reproduced with permission from the publisher.

the narrative of Japan's economic suffering. In this context, the rhetoric of the neonationalist revisionists describes nothing other than a war with Asia, one that at this stage may only be economic, but that eventually may have the leadership of Asia at stake.

Such a confrontation with an external threat would not seem to merit the urgency Fujioka and his followers exhibit if it were not for the fact that there is, simultaneously, a perception that Japan is not ready to meet such an enemy, in part because of Japan's weakness in the world but even more so because of the increasing presence of internal threats and divisions—of the Other making headway on Japanese soil. The formation of the Committee to Write New History Textbooks is first and foremost a reactionary phenomenon, an attempt to prevent changes believed to be damaging to Japan's national strength. Partially as a result of the Ienaga case and of pressure from Asian nations, history school books have gradually introduced references to the darker side of Japanese modern history (though often in an abridged, undeveloped fashion), a change that accelerated after the temporary fall from power of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) in 1993. The Committee was thus formed less to create original textbooks than to prevent these new ones from being used by students. Now that the LDP is back (the right wing of which, with elements of the former New Frontier Party, also opposes the new textbooks), the Fujioka phenomenon can be read as one element in the general mood of "getting back to business" after the aberration of a non-LDP government.

That mood, however, is difficult to sustain given the sense that the forces that previously unified Japanese have weakened since the end of the Showa era. As a narrativization of this, Aoyama Shinji's 1996 film *Helpless*, a brilliant evocation of youthful alienation and loss of identity, takes place significantly in 1989, the year of Emperor Hirohito's death, and features a *yakuza* in a constant search for his "boss"—the authority figure whose death he cannot accept because it was so central to his identity. The loss of narratives about Japanese group identity provided by Hirohito and Showa has been exacerbated by the breakdown of the cold war world structure with its comforting storybook images of good versus evil. As many have pointed out, this is a crucial intertext to the textbook debates: the loss of the East-West binary has undermined Japan's identity as the democratic front against communism in Asia without providing new structures to supplant it.⁷ To many Japanese, and Fujioka in particular, the Gulf War exposed this vacuum by presenting a Japan capable only of throwing around money without being adequately appreciated.⁸ To this was added the humiliation of perceived Japan bashing and Allied celebrations of the fiftieth anniversary of victory in World War II, particularly the Smithsonian Enola Gay debacle. That controversy seemed to underline the fear that Japan, in spite of its role as an economic superpower, has won no respect in the international political arena and thus has no identity among nations. This sense of shame in being Japanese, and especially the inability to take pride in oneself in the face of others, is frequently cited in the writings of Fujioka's group and is the reason they think Japanese make matters worse by repeatedly condemning themselves.

Such resentful feelings probably existed before the Gulf War but, without the narrative of the cold war that had channelled Japanese into the democratic defense of anti-communism, the new target became postwar democracy itself. The loss of cold war restraints has given the go-ahead for the expression of

nationalist thoughts that until now have been repressed as alien to Japan's aspirations to be the model democracy in Asia. War apologists such as Hayashi Fusao and the militarist right existed before, but now "normal" media figures like newscaster Sakurai Yoshiko, novelist Hayashi Mariko, and cartoonist Kobayashi Yoshinori air the topic of revising Japan's wartime past in a way rarely seen before. This new generation has aligned itself with the old right to make this a very public, media- and government-oriented revisionist campaign, quite unlike the guerrilla-like tactics found in neo-Nazi revisionism in Europe, as Ukai Tetsu points out.⁹ One of the reasons the campaign is so public, I believe, is because the feelings on which it is based were constructed in popular media, cinema, television, and literature. While the narratives of the *hahamono* or mythification of the suffering at Hiroshima and Nagasaki expressed those feelings, they were never before allowed to be released in the form of an articulated nationalism. Repressed by the ideal of the "peace-loving democratic nation," these emotions now emerge together with a recognition of that ideal's inability to provide a strong, positive national identity in the new world order.

Much of the fear about Japan's weakness is directed at those elements within the country that are seen to be undermining the Japanese sense of themselves as a unified, homogeneous nation. In this fantasy, the Other not only encroaches on Japan's borders, but is beginning to tear it apart from within, weakening its very soul. The Other assumes numerous guises in contemporary Japan. One, of course, is the large number of legal and illegal foreign workers in Japan, rendered menacing in tabloid tales of crime by foreigners and illegal immigrant smuggling rings reputedly run by the Chinese mafia. Even Koreans born and legally residing in Japan are seen by conservative groups as potential threats to the state, particularly since some local governments recently eliminated the citizenship requirement for public servants. The fear is that the identity of Japan itself is at stake when its official agents are not even Japanese. Women too are seen as persistent menaces, represented most recently by a proposal to allow women to keep their own family name after marriage. Conservative politicians successfully rallied to block the proposed change in family law, charging that they would undermine the unity of the Japanese family and thus the nation. That this issue is intimately related to the textbook debate is evinced by the fact that local legislatures have combined calls for the elimination of references to comfort women in the new textbooks together with statements protesting the proposed family law revisions as an integrated set of resolutions.¹⁰

Given their focus on education, the textbook debates are most directly concerned with another potential threat: the young. Japanese youth do not exhibit the political radicality of their predecessors in the 1960s and 1970s, but in the eyes of many in the media, education, and elsewhere, their apathy and lack of adherence to any metanarratives (Marxism, democracy, or even Japan itself) bodes ill for Japan's future. The large numbers of youngsters who dye their hair blond, watch only American movies, and listen to Japanese bands with English names and lyrics, rarely choose as their role models the Japanese found in Fujioka's books. The foreign influence on youth culture is an old phenomenon, but the recent trend in Japan is to identify with either African-American culture (the dominance of hip-hop or street style in youth fashion, the attempt to look black) or Asian culture (the "ethnic boom," the popularity of Asian idols and

Hong Kong movies, the proliferation of late-night television shows introducing new trends and fashions in Asian pop culture). These youth culture identities, however, are fluid. For example, a star like Katori Shingo—a member of the male singing group SMAP—plays a Vietnamese in a TV drama and then a Japanese woman in a Chinese dress in a film. He changes hair styles and clothes more often than Madonna. Identity boundaries are being crossed right and left. Many older Japanese are disturbed by the undermining of gender definitions and the possibility that some young people may identify with the Hong Kong gangster star Chow Yun Fat more than with Takakura Ken, the defender of tradition in the 1960s Toei yakuza line.¹¹

This unstable identity as Japanese reflects real discontent with current culture among younger Japanese. This profound sense of alienation and lack of place among young people is explored in films by Aoyama such as *Helpless* and *An Obsession* (*Tsumetai chi*, 1997) and in Yamamoto Masashi's *Junk Food* (1998). The cultural effects of this phenomenon, however, are deeply ambiguous. On the one hand, cynical disillusionment with the postwar democratic nation does bring some young people to sympathize with the neonationalist revisionists, especially when led by a popular *manga* artist like Kobayashi. Yet, when younger Japanese express their lack of belonging by engaging in school-bullying, teenage "compensated dating" (*enjo kosai*), and random violence like that of the 14-year-old serial killer in Kobe, the youth themselves begin to take on the aura of the non-Japanese Other. The 1997 film *Happy People* (directed by Suzuki Kosuke and based on the popular *manga* by Sawa Hidekatsu) looks on the surface like a black-humored parody of the facade of social harmony, showing everyday people committing insane acts in the name of happiness. Nevertheless it clearly places the blame for these acts not on those committing them but on the presence of Others in Japanese society who are forcing "normal" Japanese to become abnormal. The primary Other in this film is the young, who are portrayed as nothing more than animals.

Educating the Threat and Building the Nation

Textbook revisionists are reacting to these threats through the ideological apparatuses of history and education. Fujioka and his followers make history a weapon of confrontation, or even the means by which to build proud Japanese who can win the war they imagine is imminent. Japanese are not the only people who treat modern history as booty to be won. Their deformed history in the service of nationalism bears a strong resemblance to the history evoked in the United States through the Smithsonian Hiroshima exhibition.

Yet the New Textbook group cannot fully be explained by its effort to make history subject to the nationalist project. As Narita Ryuichi stresses, Fujioka is in some ways trying to protect the schoolroom from the invasion of historical research, separating education from historiography.¹² This is one reason why some of his followers do not deny, for instance, that the war in China was an "invasion" (*shinyaku*), yet they still profess to support him; to them, such tragedies may be historical truth, but that does not mean they should be taught to children as a part of a national education program. Since Fujioka himself is a professor of education at Tokyo University with no credentials as a historian, and most of the members of the Liberal Historiography Study Group are school teachers, the textbook movement must be seen primarily as an educational issue. Historians may say

whatever they want, the reasoning goes, but schools are meant to develop and socialize Japanese citizens and, as such, are not places to impart knowledge that may make children question or feel ashamed of their Japanese identity. As an educational theory then, "liberal historiography" tries to solve the nation's serious educational problems by reinterpreting students as receptacles of national ideology, protected from any knowledge that may prompt them to question their status as national subjects whose duty is to serve the state. Schools are seen as ideological state apparatuses devoted to the national interest, which produce citizens/subjects rather than individuals with a capacity for criticism. It is not difficult to see the similarities to the prewar education system.

Education has functioned as a symbol within the narrative of the Japanese nation in other conflicts in the recent past. A few years ago, several school faculty committees released the minutes of their debates over the issue of the "national" flag. Discussions raged at the time at many schools over whether to obey the Ministry of Education's decision to require schools to fly the Rising Sun and play "Kimigayo," which the Ministry described as Japan's "national anthem." One of the oft-repeated arguments in favor was that fostering respect for the Rising Sun was a part of the process of internationalization (*kokusaika*).¹³ This may seem curious (one would think internationalization implies the toning down of nationalism) but it is logical given two assumptions: that Japan does not have a robust national identity and that the international arena is, in Hobbesian terms, a mean and brutish place. Without a strong self, Japan would sink under the aggressive waves of other nations according to this scenario; only the establishment of a firm national consciousness, as a prelude to entering the international arena, can keep it afloat in the future. History then is to function like the Japanese flag, providing an ideological locus through which Japanese can be defined as Japanese, in solidarity against the world. History is merely a collection of signs in a set of myths and stories that are necessary to create a Japanese national consciousness. In this sense, the effective interrelation between the discourse of the neonationalist revisionists and mythical narratives about the nation is only an example of the role they hope historical discourse will play in the school.

Another central myth is constructed from Nihonjinron, or ideologies about the essence of the Japanese people that help redefine the boundaries of the national subject. As with much Nihonjinron discourse, Fujioka often uses the term "we": "We are Japanese, and therefore it is natural that we think first from the standpoint of Japan, of what is in the national interest."¹⁴ This assertion of a "natural" logic is profoundly ideological, creating an essence to Japaneseness that not only dictates what Japanese are, but what they must be if they want to be called Japanese. The creation of this unacknowledgedly coercive subject position effaces not only all those who are ethnically not Japanese, even if they live in Japan, but also all Japanese who do not subscribe to this logic (those, for instance, who do not side with the "national interest" as Fujioka describes it¹⁵). In other words, the coercive "we" not only divides Japanese from all others, but also eliminates differences among Japanese by silencing those who do not agree.

Fujioka writes that the question of what Japan must do should always be considered from the point of view of Japan and "how that must look from the perspective of others."¹⁶ Here he proclaims that his liberal interest takes into account the voices of

others, but then his view of history and education are clearly meant to reunify the national body by effacing traces of the threatening Other from its midst. If other points of view are to be considered, it will be only as a mirror of recognition for Japan and only when outsiders acknowledge Japan's flag and sovereignty, and respect its power. If this is internationalism, it is extremely self-centered internationalism.¹⁷

The treatment of the comfort women is the most revealing case of rejecting rather than talking to outsiders. One Korean comfort woman who, when confronted by a Japanese politician who argued that her recollections could not be true, retorted, "In the past on the battle front, you defiled my body, and now you want to defile my soul?"¹⁸ This desire, unfortunately, is the center of the body politics of the New Textbook group. To rebuild the Japanese national body and create a "healthy nationalism" (*kenzenna nashonaruzumu*—the revisionists' attractive catch phrase) in this image, the scarred bodies of comfort women themselves must be further violated and then forgotten. The violence against the Asian and female Other again renders the dialogue Fujioka purportedly desires impossible. Discourse denying the existence of comfort women cannot be conceived of as part of a dialogue (no one would make such absurd comments to a Korean, for instance). "Since these are monologic words," to quote Sato Manabu, "communication is impossible." Kang Sangjung also pointed out the fact that the revisionists only "want to reiterate a monologue without an Other."¹⁹ The ideology of the textbook revision movement is thus in many ways the reproduction of the closed society consciousness (*sakoku ishiki*) of the modern emperor system, one which denies the existence of the Other. It is a set of platitudes meant for Japanese consumption, a potion to cure the wounded national soul.

The Consumption of Asia and the Nation

Fujioka and the Liberal Historiography Study Group must also be analyzed as a product to be consumed. I have considered the packaging of their first book, but the packaging of themselves is also noteworthy. Most members take pains to distance themselves from old-time rightists who proclaim the glories of the Greater East Asia War, many like Sakurai Yoshiko acknowledge the atrocities committed by Japan. They call themselves "liberals," and declare themselves bound, as Fujioka writes, neither to the U.S. view of Japan represented in the Tokyo Trials nor to that of the inventors of the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere. Ethnologist Otsuki Takahiro, one of the group's younger members, wrote at length about the bankruptcy of both left and right under the cold war structure; what he declares he wants is a "healthy nationalism," "which is neither 'right' nor 'left,' neither 'conservative,' nor 'reformist,' nor 'liberal,'"²⁰ and which has nothing to do with the central symbol of the old right, the emperor. This is a movement conscious of the post-cold war atmosphere and the reigning disillusionment with established ideologies; it thus sells itself over the media airwaves as sweeping the field clean of old ideological baggage and reconstructing an unburdened nation.

This attractive and less offensive self-packaging may have cost the movement both clarity and significance. Suga Hidemi, a commentator not unsympathetic to the revisionists, has argued that it is impossible for them to win the textbook debate because their insistence on a liberal image constitutes acceptance of the rhetorical and discursive structures with which the left defines

the debate. They cannot succeed in creating an ideology of a strong Japan because, in this age, it is nearly impossible to construct a citizenry willing to die for the nation.²¹ Rightist rhetoric has become commonplace on the airwaves in a more palatable form, but as a result it now assumes just about the same valence as the new Tokyo Beauty Center commercial or teen idol Amuro Namie's marriage. Increased exposure for the right has come at the price of its own banality; it lacks power and has been reduced to the flow of floating signifiers that constitutes consumer culture. Its ideology enforces homogeneity and service to the state, but those issues must in the end be related to the culture of consumption in which they reside. If textbook revisionism poses a threat, it does not do so of itself, but only as part of a larger text of myths and narratives about Japan that are being consumed every day. Fujioka's group is different from the old right precisely because its location within contemporary consumerism differs, rendering its nationalism essentially consumerist.

To elucidate the problem of consumerist nationalism, I will consider the popular film *Swallowtail Butterfly (Suwaroteiru)*, directed by Iwai Shunji and released in 1996. After the success of *Love Letter* (1995), Iwai has been proclaimed by some to be the savior of Japanese cinema, and, in particular, the representative of contemporary youth culture who can finally bring the young back to theaters for a Japanese movie. Through the use of very current, MTV-like aesthetics and popular music, *Swallowtail Butterfly* sketches less a narrative than a place: a space called Yen Town, somewhere in Japan, which is populated by Chinese, Americans, Iranians and every other conceivable ethnicity. Money rules in Yen Town as part of an international economy that stands in contrast to the "normal" face of the rest of Japan, which is supposedly not penetrated by flows of transnational labor. Only a third of the film is in Japanese; the rest of the dialogue is in Chinese and English and the credits are entirely in English. Some Japanese actors are cast as Chinese and actually speak English and Chinese.

At first glance, *Swallowtail Butterfly* appears to be one of a series of films critiquing the myth of a homogeneous Japan by focusing on its ethnic minorities (Otomo Katsuhiro's *World Apartment Horror [Warudo apatomento hora]*, 1992], Sai Yoi-chi's *All Under the Moon [Tsuki wa dotchi ni dete iru]*, 1994], and Yamamoto's *Junk Food* are also good examples). It can also be seen to represent the border-crossing, fluid identities of Japanese youth that reactionary educators find so disturbing. There are no model Japanese here, in fact, the purely Japanese characters are mostly villains, and it appears that there is no unified, linguistic "we" with which to unite the nation. *Swallowtail Butterfly* as a cultural phenomenon seems to embody much of what is threatening about younger Japanese, who the neonationalist revisionists feel need educating. Yet, I would argue, it is due first, to the ambiguity of contemporary Japanese youth culture, and second, to the overarching nature of a consumerist nationalism able to unite these apparently contradictory positions, that the film and Fujioka's book ultimately share the effort to efface the Other and reconstruct the nation in a postmodern consumer culture.

Consider first the crucial scene in which the lead character Ageha, with her friend Huan, ventures off to the opium den to visit the doctor. There the aestheticization of postcolonial bricolage that reigns throughout the film gives way to a terror directed against the Chinese opium smokers they find there. On the one hand, the young couple's gaze is colonial, unmistakably viewing

an Other that is both disgusting and inferior. Despite the film's linguistic (and subtitled) polyphony, the words of these Chinese are not given subtitles, something that renders them not only more alien, but also without an internal soul that could raise them above the level of objects of fear. At the same time, the scene, with its distorted camera angles and abrupt cuts, reminds one of a more modern gaze: that of two tourists lost in unfamiliar territory, suddenly confronted with something not (yet) rendered consumable by the discourse of tourism. It is a scenario familiar in film genres ranging from the travelogue to the ethnographic documentary, from the science-fiction film to *The Adventures of Indiana Jones*.²² In a film that reduces everything to the same fetishized, consumable image, here is something not so easily swallowed: the return of the repressed, the Other making itself known. That this Other is Asian is indicative of the film's politics. Asia is cool as long as it is commodified; all that escapes that consumerist process must be a threat, the Other that commodification itself aims to efface.

For all its multicultural celebration of Asian intermixing, for all its polyphony of languages, *Swallowtail Butterfly* reveals a deep-seated fear of Asia and presents the Japanese subjectivity to conquer it. The film offers less a linguistic²³ than a visual "we" for Japanese spectators, a subject position constructed by shot angles and editing through which the viewer can identify with the terror felt by Ageha and Huan. This visual point of reference is in the end the tourist/consumerist gaze, the new identity offered for young Japanese through which they can simultaneously consume and silence the Asian Other, venture abroad while never being threatened as Japanese.

Swallowtail Butterfly dovetails with Fujioka's project by constructing a gaze that effaces the Other and covers over the historical past (the socio-historical origin of Yen Town is never explained, for instance). It markets a "liberal" acknowledgement of other voices similar to the one Fujioka proclaims, while at the same time repackaging those voices for the Japanese consumer, reducing a supposed dialogue into a monologue. The postmodern desire for an exotic Asia shown in *Swallowtail* may seem far removed from the desires of the textbook group, but Iwai's consumption of Asia must be seen as the reverse side of the coin of Fujioka's consumption of Japanese history. Both reduce Japan and its Others into images and narratives that can be reshuffled to reconstruct a mythical Japan.

Consider the scene towards the end of *Swallowtail Butterfly* in which Feihong, an illegal Chinese immigrant, is brutally tortured to death by Japanese police who verbally abuse him as a "Yen Towner." His only retort to them is the exclamation: "Your *urusato* [hometown] is Yen Town, too." In narrative terms, this operates as Feihong's attempt to undermine the police's (and thus the Japanese state's) division between Japan/*urusato* and Yen Town. In the ideology of *urusato*, anyone may have a hometown, but only Japanese can have a *urusato*, a rural origin through which to preserve their ties to traditional social and family structures in spite of the modernization and urbanization of Japan, allowing them to stay Japanese even while becoming Westernized.²⁴ Yen Town could thus not be a *urusato* given how closely the con-

cept is tied to Japanese identity. Feihong's attempt to locate the police's origins in Yen Town can thus at first glance be considered as part of the film's larger effort to deconstruct Japanese identity, especially given how attempts by other characters in the film (such as Ageha) to name Yen Town as their *urusato* stretch and distort the original meaning of the term.

Neither the film nor the characters, however, ever rejects the concept of *urusato* or critiques its narrative and the ideological role the term plays in constructing the nation. What is never questioned is the desire to have a *urusato*, to have an origin in a bordered place. Iwai's film opens up the possibility that non-Japanese can have a *urusato*, but only by constructing them as having the same desire the Japanese have for a secure locus against the vicissitudes of transnational border-crossing. The Other is then presented as in effect desiring to be Japanese, a representation that effectively absorbs the Other in the Self. The constitution of Yen Town as a *urusato* is then merely the reconstruction of the narrative of the Japanese nation along the lines of the consumerist elision of difference typified by Yen Town, creating a new Japan amidst the detritus of the postcolonial era, a space where all can become Japanese by buying into the image



Aoyama Shinji's 1996 film *Helpless*, a brilliant evocation of youthful alienation and loss of identity, takes place significantly in 1989, the year of Emperor Hirohito's death, and features a *yakuza* in a constant search for his "boss"—the authority figure whose death he cannot accept because it was so central to his identity. (Photograph from "Helpless." Courtesy of the distributor.)

of *urusato*. In this respect, it shares all too much in common with Fujioka's effort to reconstruct the Japanese nation from a post-cold war assemblage of consumable images of great Japanese. For Japanese youth who have lost their sense of national history and their pride in being Japanese—who in effect are the equivalent of Iwai's nationless Yen Towners—the neonationalist revisionists offer the commodified icon of Japan as the new space on which to narrate the nation.

Fujioka and the New Textbook group have arisen, as I have argued, due to a complex historical conjuncture at the center of which is the growing fear of threats both internal (the young, etc.) and external (Asia) Others, which are felt to be weakening the national Self. This conjuncture cannot be fully understood, however, without understanding that aspects of these threats are actually part of the same phenomenon as the neonationalist revisionists. If Fujioka's group was merely a return of the old right, and if contemporary youth culture was simply an embrace of Asia, then the opposition between the two would be clear and unambiguous. As we have seen, however, the repackaging of Japanese nationalism must be seen as a sometimes contradictory part of the same cultural phenomenon as the consumerist celebration of Asia. The latter offers a vision of Japan accepting Asia, while the former creates one of Japan accepting itself. Both sell inoffensive, consumable images of Japan, reducing the *nation* to a narration of commodified images and *nationalism* to consumption of those images. Fujioka and the textbook revisionists should be considered a threat, but not simply because they are a revival of the old right. It is their use of the media and the market, a use exemplified by the image of the girl and baby on the cover of *Kyokasho ga oshienai rekishi* and the narratives that book contains, that makes them share in the equally dangerous nationalism of which *Swallowtail Butterfly* is but one manifestation: consumerist nationalism.

Notes

1. Fujioka Nobukatsu and Jiyushugi Shikan Kenkyukai, *Kyokasho ga oshienai rekishi* (Tokyo: Sankei Shinbun Nyusu Sabisu, 1996), p. 10.
2. In Japanese, "Honto wa kono kuni no koto, yoku shiranakatta. Nihonjin no kokoro ni kizamitai 78 no monogatari."
3. Such mothers typically lost children in the war or struggled greatly in the poverty-stricken aftermath (both tragedies very real to contemporary Japanese), but their sacrifices always go unrecognized by their children or community. The masochistic pleasure involved in identifying with this suffering was a central means by which 1950s Japanese film audiences narrativized wartime and postwar history as a tale of unjust and unrecognized, but still stoically endured misery. Two of the more interesting examples of the genre are Kinoshita Keisuke's *A Japanese Tragedy* ("Nihon no higeki," 1953) and Naruse Mikio's *Mother* ("Okasan," 1952).
4. There are many discussions of the relation between masochistic pleasure and melodrama in feminist film studies, with Mary Ann Doane, *The Desire to Desire: The Woman's Film of the 1940s* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987) providing a good outline.
5. The "reasianization" that Laura Hein and Ellen H. Hammond have discussed—in which conservatives have called for Japan to rejoin Asia (as its leader)—is I believe the other side of the same coin of the perception of Asia as a threat. See "Homing in on Asia: Identity in Contemporary Japan," *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars* 27, no. 3 (1995): 3-17.
6. This theme dominates much of the discussion between Sato Manabu, Kang Sangjung, Komori Yoichi, and Narita Ryuichi in "Taiwa no kairo o tozashita rekishikan o do kokufuku suru ka?" *Sekai* 635 (May 1997): 185-199.
7. Kang Sangjung has pointed to Fujioka's personal experience of staying in the United States during the War, witnessing both the power of American

nationalism and the utter impotence of Japan, as fundamental in this ex-communist's switch to the right. See his comments in "Taiwa no kairo o tozashita rekishikan o do kokufuku suru ka?" pp. 187-188.

8. See Ukai's comments in the discussion, "Rekishi to iu senjo kara," *Impaction* 102 (1997): 68-69.
9. A point perceptively made by Kano Mikiyo, "Seikimatsu kyokasho kyosokyoku to sei no daburu standado," *Impaction* 102 (1997): 36.
10. The *ninkyō* or *yakusa* genre occupied a central position in the output of the Toei studio in the 1960s after *jidaigeki* entered into a decline. Many of the plots, such as in the *Showa zankyōden* or *Nihon kyōkakuden* series, featured the conflict between new, modern *yakusa* (defined by their Western clothes and disrespect for the chivalric codes of the gangster) and the representatives of more traditionally Japanese *yakusa* ways (with Takakura Ken and Tsuruta Koji often representing this faction).
11. See his comments in "Taiwa no kairo o tozashita rekishikan o do kokufuku suru ka?" 194. Treating historical research as a field unconnected to mass public discourse is not new: it was why many of the Marxist historians could continue publishing in specialized journals well into the 1930s without severe regulation. The publicity of the discourse—and how much it appears before children—has historically been the measure of how much government oversight it earns. The history of film censorship in Japan compared to that for publication also reveals this, given how the stories of many uncensored novels were cut only when they came to the screen.
12. See for instance, one such set of minutes printed in the *Asahi Shinbun*, 29 March 1993, p. 11.
13. Fujioka Nobukatsu and Jiyushugi Shikan Kenkyukai 10.
14. A point Komagome Takeshi makes in analyzing the same phrase: "Jiyushugi shikan wa watashitachi o 'jiyu' ni suru no ka?" *Sekai* 633 (April 1997): 64-66.
15. Fujioka Nobukatsu, *Ojoku no kin-gendaishi* (Tokyo: Tokuma Shoten, 1996): 135, quoted in Komagome 62.
16. My use of the term "self-centered" resonates with Takahashi Tet-suya's use of "jikochu" to critique Kato Tenyo's controversial assertion that Japan must bury its dead before it can deal with the dead of Asia. See his comments in the roundtable talk, "Sekinin to shutai o megutte," *Hihyo kukan* II-13 (1997), particularly pp. 13-16.
17. Quoted in Ogoshi Aiko, "Jugun ianfu" mondai no poritikkusu," *Hihyo kukan* II-11 (1996): 37.
18. See comments by Sato and Kang in "Taiwa no kairo o tozashita rekishikan o do kokufuku suru ka?" 187
19. Otsuki Takahiro, "Boku ga 'Atarashii Rekishi Kyokasho o Tsukuru Kai' o sukedachi suru wake," *Seiron* (April 1997): 56.
20. Suga Hidemi, "Kyoiku hihanron josetsu (6): Sono tame ni shiniuru 'kokka,'" *Hatsugensha* 33 (January 1997): 86-91.
21. Much has been written on the relationship between travel/tourism, the gaze, and (post-)coloniality: how the hierarchy of vision (the seer and the seen), supported by the economics of consumption, works to reproduce colonial relations of power between the Western traveller and the Eastern native. Two recent examples are James Clifford's *Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1997) and Nicholas Thomas's *Colonialism's Culture: Anthropology, Travel, and Government* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994). For a new anthology of essays on the colonialist gaze in cinema, see Matthew Bernstein and Gaylyn Studlar, eds., *Visions of the East: Orientalism in Film* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1997).
22. The strategic use of subtitles, silencing some and allowing others to "speak," effectively makes Japanese the linguistic locus of the film.
23. The image of *urusato* becomes more and more an object of consumption, an ideology in need of selling, as many Japanese lose any real contact with their rural hometowns. For examples of the marketing of *urusato*, see Marilyn Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

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