

A F T E R D A R K N E S S :

Japanese civilian internment in
Australia during World War II

C H R I S T I N E P I P E R

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C E R T I F I C A T E O F
O R I G I N A L A U T H O R S H I P

I certify that the work in this thesis has not previously been submitted for a degree, nor has it been submitted as part of requirements for a degree, except as fully acknowledged within the text.

I also certify that the thesis has been written by me. Any help that I have received in my research work and in the preparation of the thesis itself has been acknowledged. In addition, I certify that all information sources and literature used are indicated in the thesis.

Signed:

Date: May 2014

A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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To write the scenes set at Loveday internment camp, I consulted military records held by the National Archives of Australia and the Australian War Memorial, and material written by or featuring interviews with former Japanese civilian internees. Yuriko Nagata's *Unwanted Aliens*, Susumu Shiobara's memoir in the *Journal of the Pacific Society*, and the internment diary of Miyakatsu Koike were particularly helpful. Interviews I conducted with former internees and their relatives also shed light on living conditions and the emotional experience of internment. Rosemary Hemphill's *The Master Pearler's Daughter* provided valuable insight into life in prewar Broome. For the scenes set in Japan, I referred to books and articles by witnesses and historians such as Yoko Gunji, Sheldon Harris, Hal Gold and others.

An extract from the creative project was published in *SWAMP* issue 12: <http://www.swampwriting.com/?page_id=220>.

I published interviews with Mary Nakashiba, Maurice Shiosaki and Evelyn Yamashita (Exegesis Chapter One) on my research project blog: <<http://lovedayproject.com>>.

A version of 'Memory of Trauma and Conflicted Voice in *The Remains of the Day*, *Austerlitz* and *After Darkness*' (Exegesis Chapter Three) has been accepted for inclusion in the *Voice/Presence/Absence* tablet book edited by Malcolm Angelucci and Chris Caines, to be published by UTS ePress in 2014.

I have permission to use the above in this thesis.

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Abstract

Traumatic experience, such as that induced by war, is often followed by long periods of silence, as individuals and communities strive to distance themselves from the pain of the past. Yet time brings a shift against what author W G Sebald termed the ‘conspiracy of silence’, with testimonies and death-bed confessions often occurring decades after events. Across its creative and theoretical components, this thesis addresses the question: How do we narrate the traumas of the past, as individuals and collectively? It considers the moral and ethical implications of silence and telling, and examines how the passage of time affects our understanding of the past.

After Darkness is a work of historical fiction about Japanese civilians interned in Australia and other wartime misdeeds. In 1989, retired doctor Tomokazu Ibaraki reflects on the time he was interned as an enemy alien in South Australia during World War II. While working as a doctor at a Japanese hospital in Broome, he was arrested and sent to Loveday, South Australia. As the world of the camp unfolds through the doctor’s retelling, details about his past emerge—his deep connection with the nun he trained in Broome, and a trauma in Japan that triggered the breakdown of his marriage. At camp, he befriends a troubled half-Japanese internee, and when tensions between internees escalate, the doctor’s loyalties are divided as his sense of duty conflicts with his moral integrity. *After Darkness* explores how we face the traumas of our past and find the courage to speak out.

The exegesis is divided into four chapters, with each investigating different expressions of silence in narratives about past trauma. The first highlights the gaps in historical literature about the 4301 Japanese civilians interned in Australia during World War II. I profile five former Japanese civilian internees to demonstrate their varying voices according to their place within the dominant cultural paradigm. The second chapter is a creative non-fiction essay investigating the effects of silence and testimony on the understanding of Japan's wartime past. Through interviews with members of civilian activist organizations, I explore how the accidental discovery of unidentified human remains in Shinjuku in 1989 triggered the unearthing of traumatic memories, prompting individuals to speak out and opening up a dialogue for new understanding. The third chapter examines the representation of memory of trauma in *Austerlitz*, *The Remains of the Day* and *After Darkness*. Through the gaps in narration that introduce conflict in the voice, these texts probe how and when to narrate the traumas of our past, and highlight the repercussions of postwar silence. The fourth chapter is a personal essay charting the evolution of the thesis. I consider how, through writing the thesis, I addressed the gaps and silences of my own past—namely the disjuncture arising from my peripheral perspective of my Japanese heritage.

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T H E
G A T H E R I N G
L I G H T

Introduction

This exegesis aims to address the question: How do we narrate the traumas of the past, as individuals and collectively? It is not intended as a comprehensive study of how we narrate past traumas—that would require far more pages than I have at my disposal. Instead, it offers a selective examination of some of the ways individuals and societies narrate the traumas of the past.

The question of *how* we narrate the traumas of the past is linked to the question of *when*: When do we stay silent, and when do we speak out? Accordingly, this exegesis also investigates the way the passage of time affects our understanding of the past, and the moral and ethical implications of silence and testimony. Each of the four chapters is a self-contained essay that explores a different expression of silence in narratives about past trauma, from gaps in historical records to institutional silences and narrative uncertainty in literary texts. Each chapter examines the forces that facilitate and challenge W G Sebald’s notion of the postwar ‘conspiracy of silence’ (Wachtel 2007, p. 44) that conceals past horrors.

Although I have provided some explanation of my writing process in Chapter Four and a critique of my creative work in Chapter Three, I have kept such reflection and analysis to a minimum. I focus on discussing concerns raised in the content of my creative project, such as the psychological impact of internment, particularly as experienced by the half-Japanese and Australian-born internees (Chapter One), and the impact

of silence and testimony on the understanding of Japan's wartime past (Chapter Two). I took this approach as I wanted to advance knowledge through research that expands upon the themes of my creative work, rather than through an examination of my creative practice.

I drew upon an interdisciplinary framework of theory to develop this creative thesis. While I referenced literature from fields including anthropology, social psychology, genocide studies, trauma studies and media studies, I primarily engaged with research located in memory studies and literary theory (especially Sebald's writing and criticism), and I was particularly interested in the overlap between these two areas of study.

The first chapter of the exegesis, 'Perspectives On Japanese Civilian Internment in Australia', addresses the gaps in records and literature about the 4301 Japanese civilians interned in Australia during World War II. By examining available material, I highlight the government and social prejudices that influenced the internment and release of Japanese civilians. Drawing on archival records and oral history interviews, I profile five former Japanese civilian internees, all of whom were either Australian-born or of mixed Anglo-Japanese ethnicity, to demonstrate their varied psychological experience. Internment took an enduring mental toll on those who clashed with the dominant cultural paradigm of camp.

The second chapter, 'Unearthing the Past: Silence and testimony in Japan', takes the form of a creative non-fiction essay probing how the accidental discovery of human remains in Shinjuku in 1989 started a dialogue about Japan's biological warfare program, and in turn prompted individuals to speak out. Through interviews with civilian activists campaigning on behalf of the victims of Japan's wartime atrocities, I expose the schism within Japanese society over remembrance and commemoration of the war, and efforts to combat decades of institutional silence.

The third chapter, 'Memory of Trauma and Conflicted Voice in *The Remains of the Day*, *Austerlitz*, and *After Darkness*', is a literary essay that compares the representation of traumatic memory in novels by Kazuo Ishiguro, W G Sebald and me. By establishing a narrative voice that simultaneously

hides and reveals, by introducing narrative uncertainty and by using chronological complexity, these texts probe how and when to narrate the traumas of the past, and highlight the repercussions of postwar silence.

The fourth and final chapter, ‘The Other Side of Silence’, charts the evolution of the thesis and the aesthetic, theoretical, moral and ethical considerations that informed the creative process. I highlight the importance of time in navigating how and when to narrate past traumas, and offer a glimpse at my family’s reluctance to narrate its complex past. I also discuss how the thesis represents my own oblique approach to writing about my Japanese heritage. The final chapter acts as a conclusion to the exegesis, drawing the threads of the creative work, *After Darkness*, and the previous three exegesis chapters together in an interrogation of the different ways we narrate the traumas of the past.

Perspectives on Japanese Civilian Internment in Australia

More than four years ago, I began researching my novel about Japanese civilians interned in Australia during World War II. I was drawn to the topic because, as the daughter of a Japanese immigrant to Australia, the internment of Japanese civilians was something I had heard about from time to time, yet knew very little about—much like the Japanese phrases I chorused over the dinner table as a child. Because my mother is an *issei*, or first-generation immigrant, I have no family members or ancestors who were interned. But the subject appealed to me as it is entwined with ideas of identity, otherness and patriotism—issues that I had grappled with in the past. It also struck me that these issues are still current, as the recent surge in people seeking asylum in Australia stimulates widespread suspicion and debate about their legitimacy and detention.

I wanted to tell the story from the point of view of an internee—firstly, because I hoped a first-person narrative would elicit more empathy; and secondly, because I found precious little material that offered an internee’s perspective. To narrate the story from an internee’s perspective, I needed to know the camps inside out. But achieving this proved difficult. In contrast to the thousands of military files that recorded the arrest of enemy aliens, internee transportation and camp governance in meticulous detail, there were only a handful of texts written by, or featuring interviews by, former internees. My project would be an attempt to address this silence. So

I sourced archives, books, films and oral history transcripts, and conducted interviews and field trips as I attempted to answer: What was the Japanese civilian internee experience in Australia during World War II? Despite the simplicity of the research question, answering it required a broad, multi-pronged inquiry, as I considered the historical, political, social and emotional aspects of internee life. Historical details such as daily life at camp provided the necessary background for my novel—the wallpaper of the world I would construct—but my primary interest was uncovering the *psychological* experience of Japanese civilian internees, as understanding their inner lives was invaluable to create a convincing first-person narrative.

I chose to set most of the narrative of *After Darkness* within Loveday internment camp in South Australia, and I narrowed my research accordingly. My reasons for choosing Loveday were both pragmatic and poetic. Of the three permanent camps where Japanese civilians were held—Tatura (Victoria), Hay (New South Wales) and Loveday—only Hay and Loveday housed unattached men. Tatura was for Japanese families, single women or children under the age of sixteen, and as such it was unsuitable for a Japanese doctor with no family in Australia. Hay was a logical choice, as many of the Japanese employed in the pearl diving industry in Broome were eventually transferred to Hay (and my relative proximity to the site of Hay camp and the National Archives branch in Sydney that holds most of the files relating to Hay would be convenient for research)—but since the early days of my project, I was drawn to Loveday. While Tatura and Hay have been the subject of scholarship through the involvement of former child internees at Tatura and documentation of the ‘Dunera Boys’ at Hay (*The Dunera Boys* 1985; *The Dunera Boys: 70 years on* 2010), Loveday, despite being the most populous of the three camps, has been largely ignored. It was this surprising lack—the silence that surrounded the camp—that captured my imagination. Finally, there was the name: Loveday. An unintended paradox (Loveday is the name of the tiny Riverland town where the camp was located), the word evoked passion and broken dreams, and seemed a very literary term, indeed.

Review of the literature

Since the late 1980s, a small body of literature examining the civilian internment experience in Australia has emerged. Much of the work in this area focuses on the policy that governed the internment and release of enemy aliens, and draws from military and government archival material to construct a picture of life within the camps.

Margaret Bevege's *Behind Barbed Wire* (1993) is one of the earliest and most comprehensive studies in this field. It investigates the prewar political climate that led to the development of internment policy, and the implementation of this policy in relation to German, Italian and Japanese civilians. One chapter is devoted entirely to the internment of Japanese civilians in Australia, with a focus on Japanese who appealed against their internment. Many withdrew their appeals when the tribunal explained that 'public feeling would be against [them]' (Bevege 1993, p. 141), and those who persisted with their appeals were largely unsuccessful due to the tribunal's belief that releasing Japanese internees would cause agitation among the community. Pam Oliver's article 'Who Is One of Us? (Re)discovering the Inside-out of Australia's Japanese Immigrant Communities, 1901-1957', published in the journal *Japanese Studies* (2002), also concentrates on appeals made by Japanese internees at the Aliens Tribunal. Oliver provides in-depth analysis of government internment policy and intelligence reports on 'Japanese character' to expose the social and institutional prejudices of the time that made it virtually impossible to secure a release. *In the Interest of National Security* (2006) by Klaus Neumann draws on secondary literature and unpublished government records to highlight the varied experiences and backgrounds of Japanese, German and Italian civilian internees in Australia and the hypocrisy of their internment. Similarly, the ten essays in *Under Suspicion: Citizenship and Internment in Australia during the Second World War* (edited by Joan Beaumont, Ilma Martinuzzi O'Brien and Mathew Trinca, 2008) emphasise the diverse German, Italian and Japanese internee populations, the subjectivity of the internment experience and the enduring shame and stigma

suffered by internees. The fourteen essays in *Alien Justice: Wartime Internment in Australia and North America* (2000), edited by Kay Saunders and Roger Daniels, examine policy, incarceration and remembrance of civilian internment in Australia, the US and Canada. Yuriko Nagata's essay in this collection, "A Little Colony on Our Own": Life in detention camps in Australia in World War II, outlines camp life and touches on the emotions and turmoil experienced by internees of all nationalities.

Although the above texts were useful to provide an overview of internment and to shed light on the government attitude towards enemy aliens, with the exception of Nagata's essay, they provide little information from the point of view of Japanese internees.

Two published texts that combine archival research with primary interview-based research are Yuriko Nagata's *Unwanted Aliens: Japanese Internment in Australia* (1996) and Noreen Jones' *Number 2 Home* (2002). Nagata is considered the leading expert on the Japanese civilian internment experience in Australia, and in addition to *Unwanted Aliens*, she has written several journal articles (for example, Nagata 1987) and book chapters specifically about Japanese civilian internees. *Unwanted Aliens* offers a comprehensive examination of the internment of Japanese civilians in Australia—from an overview of government policy, a snapshot of camp organisation and daily life at the camps that held Japanese civilians in Australia, details about postwar release and repatriation, to a glimpse into the internment of Japanese civilians in North America. She based her findings on more than one hundred interviews conducted with former internees, military personnel and camp staff; diaries and letters written by former internees; and extensive archival research. The chapters detailing camp organisation and camp life have proven invaluable in constructing the 'world' of the camp in my creative project, and Nagata's wide-ranging documentation of former internees' memories, impressions and the emotional fallout of their internment has been key to understanding the psychological experience of Japanese internees. *Unwanted Aliens* also first drew my attention to the conflict experienced by the

Australian-born Japanese, which subsequently became the focus of my research.

Number 2 Home looks at the social and cultural contributions of Japanese immigrants in Western Australia from the late 1800s till the end of World War II. Noreen Jones conducted oral history interviews and archival, photographic and secondary research to create intimate portraits of the lives of Japanese pioneers in Australia. One chapter focuses on Japanese who worked in pearling crews, while another looks at Japanese who were interned. This latter chapter, however, focuses on internees' memories of their arrest and what happened after their release, and there is little detail about their lives during internment. While Nagata's and Jones' texts do provide insight into the psychological impact of internment from the perspective of Japanese internees, it is a fragmentary look at certain aspects of internment (such as tensions between different groups and the enduring stigma of internment) due to the subjective nature of internment and the difficulty of representing all perspectives.

There are a small number of texts written by former internees, former army officers and others about their personal experiences living within or near an internment camp. Shiobara Susumu's (1995-96) memoir charts his experience of first being imprisoned in the Dutch East Indies, then the gruelling voyage he took to Australia and his eight months' internment at Loveday in South Australia. It is invaluable for the detail it provides about the idiosyncrasies of daily life—such as smuggling newspapers from guards' barracks into internees' quarters. The personal tone of Shiobara's memoir and its first-person internee perspective provided the closest model for what I aimed to achieve in my creative project. However, it only briefly touches on the psychological impact of internment, and there is no mention of tensions that exist between different groups, for example between the Australian-born Japanese and Japan-born Japanese internees at Loveday that Nagata details in *Unwanted Aliens*. This may be due to Shiobara's relatively short stay at Loveday, and the fact he was part of a large group of Japanese from the Dutch East Indies and so had minimal interaction with internees from other countries.

Likewise, the self-published diary of Miyakatsu Koike (1987), provides valuable detail about daily life during the author's four-and-a-half years of internment—such as food, weather, sports and entertainment nights—but minimal reflection on his feelings about his internment and virtually no mention of conflict between different ethnic groups. This is perhaps because, as an educated Japanese, he only mixed with similar internees and was thus oblivious to, or purposefully ignored, the clashes with minority groups.

Finally, based on my research of published material to date, my creative project is only the second fictional exploration of the internment of Japanese civilians in Australia during World War II, and the first to present the topic from a Japanese internee's point of view. There are numerous titles in the canon of North American literature that explore the issue of Japanese civilian internment (for example, *Snow Falling on Cedars*, *Obasan*), but in Australia it is a relatively new area of interest in fiction. Cory Taylor's recently published novel, *My Beautiful Enemy* (2013), examines the unique Japanese civilian internment experience in Australia through the eyes of a former guard at Tatura camp, who looks back on the period in which he fell in love with a fifteen-year-old Japanese male internee. Although *My Beautiful Enemy* is concerned with similar themes of loss, isolation, moral ambiguity and yearning for the past, the viewpoint of the Australian guard in the setting of Tatura makes it a starkly different novel to my own.

Historical overview

The internment of Japanese civilians in the United States and Canada during World War II has been the subject of decades of scholarship (for example, Daniels et al 1991) and media attention. Through the efforts of activists, photographers (such as Toyo Mitake, Bill Manbo, Ansel Adams and Dorothea Lange), writers (including Joy Kogawa and David Guterson) and documentary filmmakers, the experience of Japanese-Americans and Japanese-Canadians during World War II is now a part of public consciousness in North America.

In Australia, however, few are aware that Japanese civilians were also interned in Australia and New Zealand during the war. This lack of awareness is partially due to the difference in numbers: only 4301 Japanese civilians were interned in Australia (Nagata 1996, p. xi) and about 45 in New Zealand (Bennett 2009, p. 64), compared to 112,000 in the United States and 22,000 in Canada (Nagata 1996, p. xi). Through my research, I have identified two more reasons for the widespread ignorance: the Japanese civilians interned in Australia were a much more multicultural group, with Formosans, Koreans and long-term residents of countries such as New Caledonia among them, thus lacking a unified ‘voice’; and nearly all were repatriated to Japan at the end of the war, diminishing their ability to speak out about their experience. (My research focuses on the experience of Japanese civilians rather than prisoners of war; as such, the literature about the Cowra, NSW breakout of 1944 is parallel to my research but does not directly inform it.)

During World War II, a total of 16,757 people of ‘enemy origin’—mainly Germans, Italians and Japanese—were interned in Australia (Nagata 1987, p. 65). While the Australian government adopted a policy of selective internment of Italians and Germans, excluding those over the age of seventy and those who had resided in Australia for more than twenty years (Nagata 1996, p. 44), the same exclusions did not apply to the Japanese. Authorities took a ‘collar the lot’ approach, and, as a result, 97.83 per cent of all male Japanese aliens registered in Australia were interned, compared to 31.7 per cent of Italian males and 32.04 per cent of German males (Lamidey 1974, p. 53). Japanese were seen as a special category of enemy aliens, with more stringent policy dictating their incarceration and release. Noel Lamidey, secretary of the Aliens Classification and Advisory Committee during the war, confirmed this in 1987: ‘Our government was firm about the Japanese. As far as I can remember, we interned the lot and as a principle, we didn’t intend to let anyone out. It was for their protection’ (Nagata 1996, p. 120).

The blanket internment of Japanese was based on four propositions:

1. No association or equivalent to the N.S.D.A.P. [the Nazi Party] or Fascio [the National Fascist Party], membership of which is an indication of the sentiments of the individual towards the country of his origin, are known to exist among the Japanese in this country.
2. Japanese nationals are not absorbed in this country as are many Germans and Italians.
3. Their well-known fanaticism and devotion to their country would probably lead to attempts at sabotage on the part of any Japanese here in a position to do this.
4. Male Japanese if left at large, would probably be the object of demonstrations which it is very desirable to avoid.

(Nagata 1996, p. 50)

Although there was virtually no evidence that Japanese civilians were acting as spies in Australia, authorities feared they would become spies if left at large, and thus interned them as a preventative measure. More than seventy per cent of local male Japanese internees, excluding the pearlers from northern Australia, were elderly, as officials believed that ‘Japanese males of any age, even sixty-five to seventy and over, may endeavour to engage in sabotage’ (Nagata 1996, p. 50).

In Australia, arrests began on December 8, 1941, just hours after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. Police stations in districts where Japanese lived had received warrants and instructions for their arrest months in advance. Most Japanese in Australia were arrested within twenty-four hours (Nagata 1996, p. 45). Almost seventy per cent were from the far north (Ganter 2006, p. 226), with the majority engaged in the pearling industry in Broome, Darwin and Thursday Island. (The pearling industry was exempt from the *Immigration Restriction Act 1901*, as long as crew were employed as indentured workers [Ganter 2006, p. 66].) Japanese based in other areas were mostly farmers, market gardeners and laundry operators (Bevege 1993, p. 130). A small number of short-term residents of Sydney and Melbourne were consular staff or employees of large Japanese firms such as Mitsui, Mitsubishi and Yokohama

Specie Bank (National Archives of Australia: C320, J78). Approximately one hundred Australian-born Japanese were also interned (Nagata 1996, p. 55). The policy of internment of Australian-born Japanese and mixed-race Japanese changed over the course of the war and was subject to interpretation. As Australian-born Japanese were British subjects by birth, they were not enemy aliens. According to government policy, however, most were interned, but some were not—depending on whether they showed sympathetic tendencies towards Japan, whether their local community supported their internment, and in some cases whether they had a good relationship with their local police commander. Some were the grandchildren of first-generation immigrants to Australia (Nagata 1996, p. 55). Many had little to no knowledge of Japanese language and culture, yet they were all interned under the sweeping banner of ‘enemy aliens’.

Of the 4301 Japanese civilians interned in Australia, only 1141 were locals (that is, living in Australia at the time of their internment)—the remaining 3160 were arrested in Allied-controlled countries such as the Dutch East Indies, New Caledonia, New Hebrides (present-day Vanuatu) and the Solomon Islands (Nagata 1996, p. xi), and sent to Australia to be interned. The Japanese from the Dutch East Indies represented the largest group of internees, with 1949 (including 550 women and children) sent to Australia after the Australian government agreed to accept them if costs were borne by the Netherlands government (Nagata 1996, p. 78). The members of this group were typically born and educated in Japan and had been sent to the Dutch East Indies to work at various plantations (linen, rubber, coffee), banks and other businesses owned by Japanese firms (Shiobara 1995). They also included about six hundred Formosans (citizens of the Japan-occupied country now known as Taiwan) and some Koreans (exact numbers are not known) who had been arrested as Japanese (Nagata 1996, p. xi). Japanese from New Caledonia were the next-largest group, comprising 1124 internees—mainly miners, farmers and fishermen (Nagata 1996, p. 77). Many were long-term residents of New Caledonia, having migrated as young men to work in nickel mines (Kutsuki 2006), and had started

families in their adopted country. Some were unable to speak or understand Japanese, and only spoke French (Shiobara 1996, p. 13). Both the Japanese from the Dutch East Indies and the Japanese from New Caledonia bitterly complained about their treatment by the Dutch and French authorities. Many were arrested and sent to Australia with little more than the clothes on their backs. On the hellish voyage to Australia, they were crammed into the stuffy hold without access to latrines and only allowed on deck for half an hour twice each day. Denied adequate food and water, some had their money, food and medicine taken from them by the soldiers. Illness spread and several died (Nagata 1996, p. 77–82). As they were not told where they were going, their eventual arrival in Australia came as a surprise. Fortunately, however, they were treated well once under Australian care, grateful for the kindness of the Australian soldiers, who offered them blankets, cigarettes and medical treatment (Nagata 1996, p. 83). One internee remembers: ‘I felt I would live when we got to Australia. The sunshine, the blue skies and smiling faces... somewhat gave me hope and strength’ (Nagata 1996, p. 83).

The internment of the overseas internees alongside local internees (whose length of residence in Australia ranged from one month to six decades) created camp populations that were unique worldwide and truly diverse. Despite being grouped together under the banner of ‘enemy alien’, the Japanese internees in Australia were extremely heterogeneous and many did not even share the same language. For almost five years, they lived together in barbed wire enclosures in the outback, in a landscape alien to them all.

Daily life at Loveday

All the internee camps were built in semi-arid regions in the outback, away from densely populated urban areas (Nagata 2006, p. 8), and Loveday was no exception. Located approximately 200 kilometres by road from Adelaide, Loveday was originally a resettlement area for World War I veterans (Bevege 1993, p. 190). It was chosen as the location for an internment

camp due to the availability of land with a reticulated water supply. The first Japanese internees to arrive at Loveday camp 14, on January 5, 1942, were fifty local (Australian) Japanese from the Northern Territory (*Internment in South Australia: History of Loveday* 1946, p. 7). In the following weeks, more local Japanese and Japanese from New Caledonia and the Dutch East Indies arrived. Compound 14B held local Japanese and Japanese civilians from the Dutch East Indies, while 14C held a mix of local Japanese and those from the



Dutch East Indies and New Caledonia. Italian civilians were housed in 14A and a mix of German and Italian civilians in 14D. Each compound housed up to one thousand internees. The Loveday group of internment camps (which included camps 9, 10, 14 and Woolenook, Moorook and Katarapko woodcutting camps) held 6756 internees at its peak in 1943 (Nagata 1996, p. 128).

The Japanese internees of Loveday quickly settled into a routine behind barbed wire. They set up an internal camp government, electing an executive committee and mayor (Shiobara 1995, p. 12), who were responsible for maintaining order within camp and reporting regularly to the military commanding

officer in charge of each compound. They organised rosters for duties such as cleaning the lavatories and shower blocks, cooking meals, cleaning up after meals and waste disposal. Each internee was required to wake at six-thirty and go to bed by ten, keep their belongings neat and attend twice-daily rollcalls. Tents and huts were subject to random inspections by military personnel, who searched for uncleanliness and contraband items such as knives and improvised heaters. Guards (many of whom were World War I veterans) treated the Japanese humanely, with many former internees expressing gratitude for their kindness (Nagata 2000, p. 194).

In accordance with the 1929 Geneva Convention relative



to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, internees were given the same rations as Australian troops. Many expressed amazement at the amount of food supplied. One former Loveday internee said, 'We... got fat from doing nothing but eating regularly' (Nagata 1996, p. 139). Beef, mutton, eggs, rice, potatoes and vegetables such as spinach, beetroot and pumpkin featured regularly on the menu. Alcohol was prohibited, but internees of all

nationalities secretly made alcohol in the compounds (Nagata 1996, p. 140).

Once a system of governance was established, the biggest problem internees faced was how to fill the many hours at their disposal. Labourers were needed to tend the market gardens, piggery and poultry farm set up by the military for profit, as well as to engage in work such as camp construction, wood cutting, tailoring and boot repair (Nagata 1996, p. 147). Three experimental crops were also grown at Loveday: opium poppies to produce morphine, guayule to make rubber and pyrethrum for insecticide (Bevege 1993, p. 190). Participation was voluntary and paid at the low rate of one shilling a day—about

the cost of two loaves of bread. Despite this, about a third of Japanese internees chose to participate (Nagata 1996, p. 149) as they had little else to do and no other way to earn money, which they needed to buy items such as sweets and cigarettes from the compound canteen. Some Japanese, particularly those from overseas, wanted to earn money but were initially hesitant to do voluntary labour as they didn't want to help the enemy. They found a solution to their dilemma by occasionally planting seedlings upside down (Nagata 1996, p. 149) and not pollinating poppies (Koike 1987, p. 65). Even so, the poppy-growing project was so successful that it eventually supplied more than half the morphine needed by the Australian army (SA Life 2011).

The Japanese at Loveday enjoyed a variety of recreational activities. They staged musical concerts, kabuki and Noh plays, creating elaborate costumes with the limited materials they had at camp, sometimes inviting the guards to join the audience. The Japanese excelled at crafts, making smoking pipes, ornamental boxes and traditional *geta* sandals from discarded wood, scissors and knives from disused drums, plus straw baskets, lamps (fuelled with leftover cooking fat), chess and *mahjong* sets and musical instruments such as guitars, violins, harps and shamisen. From time to time, they held art shows to display their creations. They also put a great deal of effort into beautifying their surrounds, planting shrubs, cacti and flowering plants (Nagata 1996, p. 161), and creating elaborate landscaped gardens. They even built small wooden Shinto shrines for worship.

Participation in sport was encouraged to alleviate boredom. Baseball and sumo were popular, but soccer, cricket and tennis were also played—the latter often with the guards on



courts near the guard camp. In late 1944, the internees built a mini golf course inside the compound (Koike 1987, p. 147). In their spare time, internees could take language lessons in Japanese, Taiwanese and Malay taught by fellow internees (Koike 1987, p. 86–89).

Internees celebrated Japanese national holidays, including New Year's Day and the emperor's birthday (Nagata 2000, p. 195), with speeches, dancing and concerts. In late 1942, the Japanese internees of 14B refused to go to work as they wanted to celebrate Pearl Harbor Day (Nagata 2000, p. 195). They were occasionally treated to movie nights and walks outside the camp grounds.

Although internees enjoyed plentiful food, humane treatment by the guards and ample time for recreation, camp life was full of hardships. The loss of freedom, separation from loved ones and privation was too much to bear for some: there were four suicide attempts by Japanese at Loveday within the first ten months of their arrival (Nagata 2000, p. 188). In June 1942, a New Caledonian internee swallowed glass and later died in hospital (Nagata 1996, p. 159-160). The extreme weather conditions of the semi-arid climate also made life insufferable, as internees endured frequent dust storms and temperatures of more than forty degrees Celsius in summer and freezing in winter, while living in tents and uninsulated corrugated-iron huts.

Aliens Tribunal

Internees were given the opportunity to appeal to a tribunal against their internment. They first had to seek approval from their camp commandant before the Aliens Tribunal scheduled a hearing (Nagata 1996, p. 102). From the beginning, however, the odds were against the Japanese. The war cabinet considered not allowing any Japanese to appeal, but determined 'such open discrimination' might 'react to the disadvantage of British subjects in Japan' and be 'politically embarrassing after the war' (Bevege 1993, p. 134). So cabinet decided to hear only extreme cases—those whose age, long residence in Australia or family considerations convinced military intelligence that

they did not present a security risk (Bevege 1993, p. 135). Even so, the tribunal was advised beforehand ‘not to recommend release except in very exceptional cases and then only under severe restrictions’ (NAA: MP508/1, 255/702/1731).

The first hearings of Japanese appeals took place in January 1942, with later hearings that year. Japanese internees had to meet several criteria in order to successfully appeal. They had to prove that: they presented no future risk; they presented no danger to society or to the prosecution of the war; their release would not cause unrest in the community, and also not deter men from enlisting for fear that aliens would take their jobs; they were Australian in orientation; and they retained no Japanese national characteristics (Oliver 2002, p. 279). The last point was particularly difficult to prove and subject to interpretation by the counsel. For example, the tribunal believed that a son who obeyed his father reflected a ‘belief in obedience to the Emperor as the divine head of the race’ (Oliver 2002, p. 279). Membership of Japanese clubs (such as the Nihonjinkai [Japanese Society] in Broome, Thursday Island, Cairns, Mackay, Sydney and Melbourne; the laundrymen Doshikai in various cities; and the Nippon Club in Sydney) was viewed as evidence of nationalist leaning.

The tribunal consisted of three civilian lawyers and a representative of the Minister for the Army who presented the government’s opinion about each internee based on information in Security Service dossiers (Oliver 2002, p. 279). An interpreter was present at the hearings. Internees were entitled to witnesses and legal counsel, but most were unable to organise such assistance (Oliver 2002, p. 279). Military intelligence encouraged the tribunal to use the hearings as an opportunity to gather, ‘through skilful questioning of the Japanese internees’ (NAA: MP508/1, 255/702/1731), more intelligence about Japanese activities.

Japanese connected to the pearl diving and shipping industries—or in fact any activity associated with coastal waters—were viewed with particular mistrust, as authorities were suspicious a spy ring was operating out of Australia’s northern waters (Nagata 1996, p. 47). One such case was John Nakashiba, the father of Mary Nakashiba (see case study

below). Even though John had lived in Australia for fifty years, had married an Australian-born woman and had worked as a translator for Australian naval intelligence in Darwin, he was interned, as was his entire family. John's work as the local agent for pearl divers in Darwin was seen as a red flag. During his appeal hearing, the counsel for the army, Captain Gillard, pressed him over his conversations with captains of pearling luggers. 'Did you tell the Captains of the luggars [sic] that there were some American Air Force men there?' Gillard asked. 'No,' John replied. Gillard also urged John to explain why he was president and secretary of the Japanese Society if he was Australian in his outlook, as he said he was. John revealed he was only honorary president as he leased his premises to the society, and he'd actually had a falling out with the Japanese Society acting president over his work for the Australian military. Despite this, he was refused leave (NAA: MP529/3, TRIBUNAL 4/155).

A handful of Australian-born Japanese also appealed their internment. Their hearings, perhaps more than any other, demonstrate the farcical nature of the Aliens Tribunal and the near impossibility of being granted a release. Thirty-six-year-old cook James Hamabata, born in Onslow (WA) to Japanese parents, was not able to successfully appeal his internment as a Japanese enemy alien as he was actually Australian by birth—a catch-22 of absurd scope. After a brief questioning, the chairman stated: 'As you are an Australian born subject this Tribunal has no jurisdiction to deal with your case. Your case will have to go before a different Tribunal, so we cannot go any further with it to-day' (NAA: MP529/3, BOX 9). However, a different tribunal catering to the Australian-born internees was never arranged. James Hamabata was not released from internment until October 1946.

A fortunate few were recommended for release by the tribunal, only to have it refused by military intelligence (see Joseph Suzuki case study, below). In a four-page document, Security Service inspectors listed twenty-one reasons why Joseph Suzuki and Ken Shimada should remain interned, one of which was that 'sons of a Japanese is [sic] always regarded as a Japanese national even if he had some other nationality'

(NAA: ST1233/1, N61798). Some internees who were granted release decided—or were persuaded by the tribunal—to withdraw their appeal and stay interned for their own safety, due to widespread anti-Japanese sentiment. Australian-born Edith Kashimura, whose husband was interned at Hay, apparently stated that ‘it would be better for his own sake if he were kept in detention as she did not realise how bitter local feeling was’ (NAA: C320, J90). Half-Japanese Douglas Umino was granted release on the condition he had suitable employment. He was offered a job as a caretaker of a deserted mine in rural New South Wales, but turned it down. ‘Umino, after due consideration, decided that as the job of caretaker would carry a very small salary he was far better off in internment where the Govt. supplied him with food, clothing and medical attention’ (NAA: C123, 17788).

In keeping with the war cabinet’s desire to release as few Japanese internees as possible, the rate of release of Japanese was considerably lower than for Europeans. My analysis of files held by the National Archives of Australia indicates that of the at least 146 Japanese who appealed against their internment, the tribunal recommended the release of less than a dozen—yet some of those were denied leave by the Security Service. Seventy-four per cent of Italian internees were released by December 1944 (and forty per cent were released before Italy capitulated in September 1943), and twenty-five per cent of Germans were released by December 1944. In contrast, only six per cent of Japanese were released before the cessation of hostilities with Japan (Nagata 1996, p. 120).

Nationalism and conflict

On the surface, the Japanese internee compounds 14B and C at Loveday appeared to be perfect examples of communal harmony. The internees performed plays, organised art exhibitions and tended their vegetable and decorative gardens in an apparent spirit of cheerful cooperation. The conduct of the Japanese at Loveday was so exemplary they were described as ‘model prisoners’: ‘Their fanatical desire to maintain

“face” made them easy to handle in their eagerness to obey all orders and instructions to the letter’ (*Internment in South Australia: History of Loveday* 1946, p. 10). The Germans, on the other hand, were described as ‘arrogant [and] appreciated strict discipline’, while the Italians were ‘[n]aturally temperamental’ (*Internment in South Australia: History of Loveday* 1946, p. 10). Although there were several breakout attempts and some successful breakouts by the Italians and Germans (resulting in the eventual capture of the escapees), no Japanese civilian internees attempted to break out (Nagata 2000, p. 201). It is worth noting that Japanese POWs were considerably more recalcitrant and staged two mass revolts: the first was a riot at Featherstone camp in New Zealand in February 1943, which left forty-eight POWs dead; and the second was the famous Cowra breakout of August 1944, in which 231 Japanese died (Gordon 1994, p. 3). Japanese soldiers were trained to consider capture the greatest shame. Civilian internees did not share this view.

My initial research supported the view of an overwhelmingly harmonious existence among the Japanese. The son of a pearl diver interned at Hay camp said his father only ever spoke of happy memories and the friends he made at camp (Hojo 2010). Susumu Shiobara’s memoir of his eight months interned at Loveday mentions no friction between internees, aside from a minor incident when a senior employee of a prestigious company took more than his fair share of jam (Shiobara 1995, p. 11). One former child internee at Tatura I interviewed, Maurice Shiosaki, said, ‘All the time we were there, we were very happy. There was no bitching or fighting in the camp’ (Shiosaki 2012). Another, Evelyn Yamashita, had ‘no sad memories’ from her time at Tatura. ‘I think we got on well together,’ she said (Yamashita 2012a).

As my research deepened, however, I found evidence of unrest beneath the orderly exterior of camp. Yuriko Nagata highlights several instances of hostility at camp, including the ongoing friction between Japanese and Formosans. According to records, two half-Chinese, half-Japanese Formosan brothers at Loveday compound 14C ‘were found to have been ill-treated, forced to carry out fatigues inside the compound,

and prevented from engaging in paid employment. These two internees were transferred to another state' (Nagata 1996, p. 176). The report, dated April 1945, summed up intra-compound relations thus: 'There has always been ill-feeling existing between the Half-breeds and the Japanese, the latter treating the former in a very disdainful manner. The majority of petty fights in the Compound have been between these two sections.'

Despite the tension between the Japanese and the minority Formosans, the population nearly always appeared calm to army personnel. Former guard Bob Margitich said he was 'not very aware' of problems among the Japanese internees. 'Let's say there was friction which became a fight in 14C... By the time we got there, they were all poker-faced. There was nothing wrong anywhere... If you went into the German or Italian sides, there would be one group on this side and one on the other, swearing at each other in their own language. But if you went into 14C, everything was dead quiet. There was no way that I could read their faces. It was a bit scary...' (Nagata 1996, p. 177). The compound executive committee, which represented the entire compound population, strove to mask outward signs of discontent. Any unrest would undermine the competence of the camp leaders and result in their loss of face. Former Loveday internee Shigeru Nakashiba explained: 'I think most Japanese thought they should obey rules when captured. That was the education in Japan' (Nagata 1996, p. 143).

Formosans were not the only minority to clash with other Japanese at camp. Australian-born internees at Loveday were also involved in various disputes. Records suggest Broome-born half-Japanese, half-Chinese Jimmy Chi was victimised at camp. He wanted to see the official visitor (the International Red Cross representative) regarding his missing possessions, but was always out working when the visitor arrived. The compound secretary, Shigeru Yamaguchi, told him such matters had to be channelled through him, but that he was not forewarned of these visits. Camp authorities, however, said Yamaguchi's statement was false and he always knew of impending visits (NAA: A11797, WP8258).

As a half-Japanese Australian, I was naturally drawn to the experience of the mixed-race and Australian-born Japanese

internees. Caught between two cultures, they were welcomed by neither. Reading through various source material, it was difficult not to pity them, as they were dealt one blow after another. Despite being proudly Australian, loyal and, in some cases, eager to risk their lives to fight for their country, they were arrested and interned on suspicion of their Japanese sympathies. At camp, they were further alienated by the nationalist outlook and propaganda espoused by some of the internees. Despite their efforts, most were unable to convince the authorities of their loyalty and secure their release. Nearly all were interned for the duration of the war.

Disputes involving the Australian-born internees usually resulted from differences in patriotic beliefs. At Woolenook, a woodcutting camp on the banks of the Murray River that was a part of the Loveday group of camps, a rift developed between a group of Australian-born Japanese and the other internees, who were mostly from New Caledonia. The Australian group, known as ‘The Gang’, comprised seven Australian-born—Jimmy Chi (who had shifted from Loveday), James Hamabata, Jack Tolsee, Patrick Ahmat, Eddie Ahmat, Sam Nakashiba and Joseph Suzuki (who was born in Japan but raised in Australia since he was six months old)—and one Indonesian-born, Ted Takamura (Nagata 1996, p. 175). A chaplain at Woolenook remembered: ‘They were different from the other Japanese... They had trouble with the other Japanese so they were put into a special tent. They refused to sign allegiance to the Emperor’ (Nagata 1996, p. 173). In June 1944, the Japanese at Woolenook went on strike because they didn’t want to work with The Gang (Nagata 1996, p. 175). Sam Nakashiba experienced hostility at Hay, Loveday and Woolenook. ‘[I]t was at Loveday that Sam got belted up [along with other half-Japanese],’ his sister, Mary, said (Nakashiba 2012b). ‘The soldiers had to rescue them.’

Prolonged internment took a severe psychological toll on some of the Australian-born, mixed-race internees and long-term residents of Australia. Joseph Suzuki was twice hospitalised with depression during his two-and-a-half years of internment (see case study below). Similarly, 22-year-old Dorothy Suzuki (no relation to Joseph Suzuki), interned at Tatura, complained

about her isolation and resultant depression: ‘This internment is affecting my mental outlook on life. I get very morbid and depressed, as I am friendly with only a few people in this camp, and those are the few who speak English. During the eleven months of my internment in this camp, I have found myself unable to fall in with the Japanese customs and habits of the people here, and have had to suffer consequently’ (Neumann 2006, p. 51). According to John Nakashiba’s daughter, her father became a ‘zombie’ while at camp, suffering a mental breakdown due to the conflict he felt between his Japanese origins and Australian outlook (Nakashiba 2012a).

Despite the seeming equanimity of the Japanese internee population, deep antagonism existed among the internees. Formosan, mixed-race and Australian-born internees—and some long-term residents of Australia who had adopted the Australian way of life—particularly suffered during their internment. The experience profoundly affected some and burdened them for years to come.

Conclusion

My research has shown that the Japanese civilian internee experience in Australia during World War II was as varied as the individuals themselves. The contrasting first-person accounts of internment at first confounded me. Although a few, such as Mary Nakashiba, ‘felt the end of the world had come’ when she was interned (Nakashiba 2012b), many others—even those from the same compound—remembered it as an overwhelmingly happy time and expressed sorrow at leaving camp. I initially found it difficult to explain the disparity in experience. Was the conflict localised to one compound, or just a small number of individuals? Were those individuals causing unrest? Some material certainly seemed to suggest The Gang were troublemakers at Woolenook, while other sources depicted them as victims. I also wondered whether some former internees emphasised their past pain, while others tended to sugar-coat their memories—and if this was due to the Japanese cultural tendency towards stoicism

rather than complaint.

The answer was a combination of all of the above. The primary sources I used were mostly oral history interviews with former child internees at Tatura, as there were no former Loveday internees to interview, due to their older age and perhaps also their reluctance to talk about their internment experience. As Tatura was a family camp, security was laxer and internees—especially children—enjoyed more freedom than at camps such as Loveday. Young children were also oblivious to the clashes and hardship experienced by the adults. ‘I think we children rather enjoyed this new interesting communal life,’ Joe Murakami said (Nagata 1996, p. 159). For these reasons, their accounts of internment tended to be favourable.

Furthermore, those who were traumatised by their experience at camp were less likely to speak about it, creating a bias in research material. ‘Many of the former internees were at first reluctant to talk about their past. Some wished to remain anonymous and others, both in Japan and Australia, still feel ashamed about having been prisoners during the war’ (Nagata 1996, p. xiv). In 1987, Hannah Suzuki begged researcher Yuriko Nagata not to contact her brother, Joseph, as it would upset him too much (Nagata 1996, p. 235), indicating the extent of his suffering. Mary Nakashiba said her sister, Rhoda, never raised the topic of their internment—neither during camp nor in the decades afterwards. ‘She was greatly affected. She always used to cry in her sleep. She couldn’t talk about it’ (Nakashiba 2012a).

Of the three former Tatura internees I interviewed, only Mary Nakashiba dwelt on the negative psychological impact of her family’s internment. I ascertained this was due to her relationship to the dominant cultural paradigm within camp. As a pro-Australian half-Japanese internee who didn’t speak any Japanese, Mary was a vocal minority who clashed with the imperialist compound leaders. Unlike Evelyn Yamashita or Maurice Shiosaki (see case studies below), Mary did not have the support of a large family around her. Her relative isolation and numerous disputes compounded her distress and feelings of abandonment resulting from her internment.

The members of The Gang were similarly at odds with the dominant cultural paradigm, further increasing their suffering. They did not respect the importance of group harmony in Japanese culture, and their unwillingness to cooperate with the nationalist camp leaders led to their ostracism at camp.

The Japanese civilian internment experience was thus shaped by feelings of belonging. Those whose beliefs and sympathies mirrored the dominant ideology reported the most positive experiences of internment. Conversely, pro-Australian internees probably suffered the most, as they felt rejected by their country *and* their fellow internees. They neither belonged outside nor inside camp. For the most part, they were forced to suffer in silence, as the Japanese leaders of the compounds masked signs of discontent for fear of losing face. The trauma of their internment also contributed to their continued silence in the decades after the war.

Mary Nakashiba

Born: Thursday Island, 1926

Interned: Tatura (Victoria), 1941–44

Seventy years have passed since half-Japanese Mary was interned as a fifteen-year-old, but the shocking turn of events after Japan bombed Pearl Harbor is still clear to her. After being arrested in Darwin, Mary and her family were transported to Sydney by ship along with hundreds of other Japanese. ‘When we got off the ship, there was a crowd of people lining the harbour. They were screaming, “Kill them!

Shoot the bastards!” I couldn’t believe it—these were Australians, people of my own country. I’ll never forget it. I was in total, utter shock. That was the point that I realised my life would never be the same’ (Nakashiba 2012a).

Mary’s brother, Sam, was separated from the family and taken away. ‘My mother protested that he was only seventeen years old. But [the soldier] said, “No, he’s got to go.” We didn’t hear from him until he was released... We didn’t know where he was...’ (Nakashiba 2012b) The rest of the family—Mary; her Japanese father, John, who migrated to Australia fifty years earlier; her European mother, Anna; and twelve-year-old Rhoda—spent the next three years inside the barbed-



wire fences of Tatura camp in Victoria. Although they were treated reasonably well by staff at camp, it was a far cry from the comfortable life they’d had in Darwin, where Mary’s father had a general store. They endured freezing winters and had to sleep on sacks stuffed with straw until Mary’s mother negotiated with the Red Cross to receive proper mattresses and bedding. For a vibrant teenager such as Mary, the years at camp were ‘a time of extreme boredom’. ‘You felt powerless... I thought many times of climbing that fence. But I thought, if

I do climb that fence and they don't shoot me, where would I go?' (Nakashiba 2012a)

During the many months she was interned, Mary mourned 'the loss of [her] Australian identity'. 'I felt betrayed by my country... That was the biggest hurt of all—to know that I was an enemy alien in my own country. I had no people, no country, because I wasn't accepted by the Australian people, and I wasn't accepted by the Japanese. I couldn't identify with anybody.'

For Mary, one of the most difficult aspects of internment was living with the imperialistic Japanese internees at camp. When Mary refused to bow in the direction of the Emperor, one of the compound leaders forcibly pushed her head down. And when Japan bombed Darwin in February 1942, Mary was enraged that the internees around her celebrated. 'They put on a celebration. *Banzai!* It was just terrible... I lost a lot of close, close friends [in Darwin]. So that bred a lot of hatred. I think hatred keeps you alive, keeps you going... My mother used to say, "You mustn't hate." But I *hated*.'

The Nakashiba family's inability to fit in with the more traditional Japanese internees was a continual source of friction, culminating in a dispute over laundry facilities. 'My mother was using a boiler in the laundry, and the compound leader came and took out her washing and dumped it all on the ground so that he could use it. She shouted at him, so he hit her on the head with a stick. I threw a bar of soap at him. Then he blamed me for starting the fight.' As a result, Mary's family moved into a neighbouring compound that housed mostly Japanese from the Dutch East Indies. 'The people in the Indonesian camp were very nice people,' Mary said. 'We made a lot of friends.'

Mary's father had a mental breakdown in camp, which she attributed to the conflict he felt as a Japanese who had lived nearly all his life in Australia. 'He felt Australia was his country, his home... and so to have this disrupted and find that you are an enemy alien... And also there was the heart-break [of the Darwin bombings]—this was his country that was doing it... He knew there was no place for him.' John died a few months after they were released from internment

in 1944. 'It's the older people, not the younger people, that are really affected by warfare,' she said.

After the war and the death of Mary's father, the family was penniless and relied on the kindness of friends, family and strangers to get by. Despite Mary's ordeal, she is not bitter and does not want an apology or compensation from the government. 'It's part of my life, I accept it... I think it built a lot of iron in me. It built resilience. And I tell you what, it certainly gave me a lot more compassion.'

Maurice Shiosaki

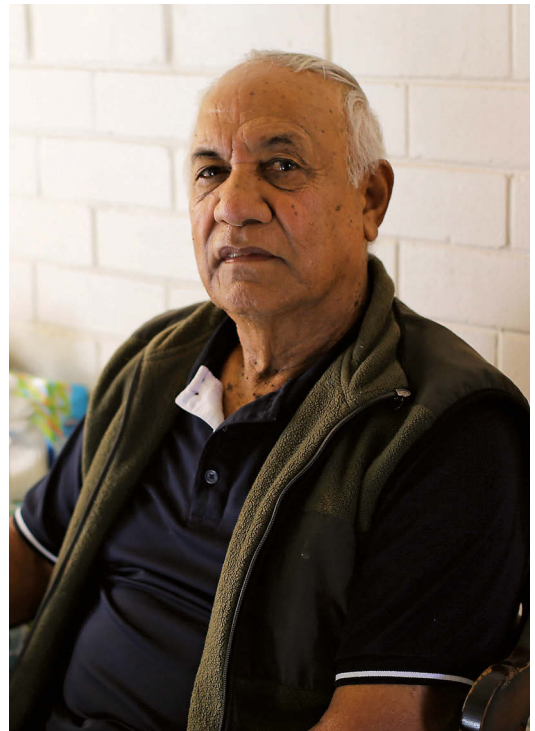
Born: Broome, 1939

Interned: Tatura (Victoria), 1941–46

As a boy interned at Tatura in Victoria, part-Japanese, part-Aboriginal Maurice and his older brothers made kites to pass the time. Standing in the barbed-wire enclosure of the family camp, they released their kites and watched them soar high above them. ‘We used to make our own kites out of bamboo and the paper that apples used to be wrapped in. We made glue out of flour and water. We used sewing cotton for the string. The older boys used to crush light globes into a powder and mix flour and water in, run the mixture along the string and then dry it out. Then we’d fly our kite, and the boys from the other compounds used to fly theirs—so we’d be standing in different compounds—and we’d go *voom!* To try to cut their string. That was kite fighting—it was all friendly, though’ (Shiosaki 2012).

Kite fighting was one of many activities Maurice did during the five years he was interned, from the age of two to seven. He also recalls taking part in *sumo* matches against other kids and occasionally being treated to picnics outside camp grounds. ‘I remember eating hot dogs. We used to go in army trucks out to this lake. It was a nice area—a lot of wildlife. They had big containers to boil hot dogs in.’

The Shiosakis were a family of eight children, so there was never a shortage of playmates for Maurice, who remembers his time at camp fondly. ‘We were treated very well, as far as I can remember... All the time we were there, we were very happy.’ Maurice spent so much time socialising with the other Japanese kids at camp that his Japanese became better than his English. ‘I could talk Japanese A-1 until I left the camp...



[But] I've forgotten it all now.'

But the family experienced hardship in other ways. Maurice's father, Shizuo, owned a laundry business in Broome, but when war broke out with Japan he was forced to abandon it. 'They said, "Pack your things up, you're going." That was it... [My father] lost everything,' Maurice said. When the family was finally released from internment in 1946, they had to start afresh. Maurice's father found work in Perth doing the laundry at Clontarf Boys Town, then later in Mullewa (WA) working on the railway.

On the day of their release from internment, the Shiosakis farewelled the life they had known for five years and the people they had shared it with. Many of their friends were being sent to Japan against their wishes as, according to government policy, Japanese who weren't married to British subjects or who didn't have Australian-born children couldn't stay in Australia (Nagata 1996, p. 193). 'The saddest part of all our time at camp was when it was time to leave,' Maurice said. 'There were rows and rows of army trucks the day we started to move out. Everyone was crying. Everyone was clinging to the fence.'

Evelyn Yamashita

Born: Thursday Island, 1928

Interned: Tatura (Victoria), 1941–47

The morning of December 8, 1941 was thick with humidity on Thursday Island, the Torres Strait community located beyond the northernmost tip of mainland Australia. As clouds roiled in the sky overhead, the island’s Japanese, Chinese, Malay, Indonesian, Filipino, white and native Torres Strait Islander inhabitants prepared to go about their business before the heat of the day peaked. Thirteen-year-old Evelyn Yamashita woke to find that army personnel had built a barbed wire fence around her entire community. ‘Nearly all the Japanese lived in that one area. Others in town... were brought [to] where we were living’ (Yamashita 2012a). Few in the community had heard about the bombing of Pearl Harbor, which had occurred hours earlier.

The approximately two hundred-strong Japanese population was held within the barbed wire enclosure for two weeks. A few days before Christmas, they were transported south by ship. The Yamashita family—comprising mother Tei, who was born on Thursday Island, father Haruyoshi, who had emigrated from Japan 43 years earlier, and their eight Australian-born children, of whom Evelyn was the eldest—spent both Christmas and New Year’s Day on the cramped ship. They arrived at Tatura internment camp on January 9th, 1942. It was to be their home for the next five-and-a-half years.

Evelyn, who was surrounded by her large family at camp, has few bad memories of internment. Security wasn’t strict at Tatura—especially not for the children, many of whom were from New Caledonia and could only speak French. They played sport and occasionally went on picnics. ‘A guard would accompany us



with his rifle. On one occasion, one of the older kids carried the rifle for him.’ Some nights, they were treated to a film. ‘A chap from the Kraft Walker Cheese Company used to show us some films: mostly Charlie Chaplin and educational films.’ Evelyn’s greatest regret was not being able to attend school. ‘I did my intermediate exams [Year 10] while I was interned and I wanted to do my leaving exams [Year 12], but I couldn’t—that was when the war ended and camp was disbanded.’ Despite the gap in her education, Evelyn didn’t resent her internment. ‘It was explained... that [because we] were Japanese... if [we] were outside, [we’d] fare a lot worse than inside camp.’

Evelyn was released in February 1947, staying at a friend’s place in Manly to attend secretarial college. ‘I asked to be released so I could help my family by learning office work,’ she said. The rest of her family remained interned after the war ended while authorities searched for appropriate housing. ‘They didn’t have anywhere to send us. Thursday Island was in a mess—it was still a military zone.’ In Sydney, Evelyn quickly adjusted to life outside camp. ‘Nobody took me as Japanese,’ she said. ‘The kids across the road used to stand on the footpath and chant, “Ching-chong Chinaman!” when I waited to catch the bus... I just ignored them.’

The Yamashita family was finally released in August 1947. Evelyn’s father, who had owned a soy sauce and miso factory on Thursday Island, lost all his assets. ‘There was nothing left. As far as we know, the army dismantled it during the war’ (Nagata 1996, p. 230). ‘I was told most of the materials were taken to New Guinea to make buildings for the Australian Army... We had four buildings, including our house. The trouble was, in those days, Asians were not allowed to own any land, because of the White Australia Policy. My father didn’t own the land, [so] he didn’t get any compensation for his buildings’ (Yamashita 2012b). After the family returned to Thursday Island, a friend rented a house to them and helped Haruyoshi set up a general store. ‘[We] were readily accepted back into the community by most people on Thursday Island. [But] there were a few [new] people who... didn’t like us’ (Nagata 1996, p. 231).

Evelyn eventually married a fellow internee at Tatura. The couple settled in Sydney and had two children. Evelyn is now 85.

Joseph Suzuki (né Shibuya)

Born: Mikage, Japan, 1922

Interned: Liverpool (NSW), Hay (NSW) and
Loveday (SA), 1941–44

Like many young Australian men of his generation, Joseph Suzuki valued mateship and loyalty. He hoped to find love and serve his country in war. But, amid wartime suspicion, his Japanese descent proved an impediment.

Born in the village of Mikage, near Kobe, in 1922, Joseph lived in Japan for only the first six months of his life before he permanently settled in Australia. Joseph's father, a Japanese sea captain named Harohiko Shibuya, died prior to Joseph's birth. His Australian mother, Ada May, was left destitute in Japan with two young children in her care (Joseph's sister, Hannah, was two years old at the time). Due to the restrictions of the White Australia Policy, Ada May needed special permission to return to Australia with her two Japanese-born children (Nagata 1996, p. 104). Upon her return, she lived with her parents in Geelong, before marrying Sakuhei Suzuki, a Sydney-based Japanese laundryman, in 1927 (NAA: A367, C60569). Ada May had three more children with Suzuki. The family lived in Hurlstone Park in New South Wales.

Joseph grew up to be a thoughtful and hardworking young man. He was said to have 'a very deep nature... [He] is clever, shy and very kind' (NAA: ST1233/1, N61798). After finishing high school, he went to a technical college and became an apprentice surveyor. But when war broke out, Joseph was intent on joining the Second Australian Imperial Force (AIF). This provoked a fierce argument with his stepfather, who was staunchly anti-British and particularly hard on his stepchildren (NAA: C329, 921). Sakuhei apparently told Joe he should shoot himself and never return home. Joe slept in Hyde Park that night (NAA: C329, 921).

In June 1940, at the age of eighteen, Joseph was accepted into the AIF. He lied about his place of birth and his age, 'so as to dispense with the necessary parental consent'. '[A]ll my friends and schoolmates were joining up and I didn't see why

I shouldn't do my bit for Australia,' he wrote (NAA: A367, C60569). However, to his great distress, he was discharged from the AIF eight months later, at the request of military intelligence upon discovery of his nationality (Nagata 1996, p. 106).

On December 8, 1941, Joseph was interned at the age of nineteen. According to Ada May, Sakuhei was responsible for Joseph and Hannah's internment. When officers arrived at the family home to arrest Sakuhei, he told them: 'There are two more Japanese in here,' prompting the officers to arrest Joseph and Hannah, too (NAA: C329, 921). The three kin were sent to Liverpool internment camp. Hannah stayed there, while Joseph and Sakuhei were transferred to Hay internment camp shortly afterwards.

During his time in internment, Joseph's misfortune only increased. Proudly Australian (he even sported a tattoo of the map of Australia on his left arm) and unable to speak Japanese, he found himself at odds with the other internees. Years later, in a newspaper interview, he said: '...the worst part of the internment was having to associate with the Japanese... Several of them tried to get at me with propaganda; the others were very hostile' (*Sunday Telegraph* 1945 in NAA: ST1233/1, N28869). Luckily, Joseph found a friend in seventeen-year-old Sam Nakashiba (brother of Mary Nakashiba, above), who was born in Australia and similarly pro-Australian. Sam explained the friction: 'The Japanese at Hay resented our attitude towards their customs and beliefs, and as we maintained our nationality and our loyalty to this country, they became antagonistic towards us' (Nagata 1996, p. 175).

Joseph was one of the few Japanese internees recommended for release by the Aliens Tribunal in May 1942. The government's counsel noted: 'Possibly he has the strongest case for release from internment that one could conceive... After all, he was discharged from the AIF purely on racial grounds' (NAA: MP508/1 255/702/1731). Despite this, Joseph spent two more years in internment, as his release was opposed by the Security Service. The security inspector reasoned that as a surveyor and former member of the AIF, 'no better contact could be free to assist his fellow countrymen. His military training and geographical knowledge would be of utmost

value' (NAA: A367, C60569).

Joseph suffered during his internment, exacerbated by his proximity to his belligerent stepfather. As Ada May noted in a letter to her son: 'As time goes by and Japan is getting beaten, people like Sakuhei Suzuki will again attack you young Australian loyal boys who have always been loyal to Australia and have *no* Japanese sympathies' (NAA: ST1233/1, N61798). In February 1943, Joseph was sent to an army hospital in Goulburn. According to an intelligence report, he was 'suffering from "depression". From his conversation and actions he appeared far from normal' (NAA: ST1233/1, N61798).

The letters Joseph wrote while he was interned reveal a sensitive, articulate soul who felt deeply. One letter, in elegant script, addressed to Isobel Watts in March 1943, drew the attention of the censors:

As you are no doubt aware, my feelings towards you for the past seven years have been of the most sincere, and I believe you have not regarded my attention towards you unfavourably. Up to the present, my circumstances have not permitted me to hope for an improvement in our friendship so that it may ripen into something deeper and more lasting.

When I left Sydney over a year ago, I was more or less under a cloud, and consequently I have not written to you during my prolonged absence. Now that I believe my Australian birth and citizenship to have been proved to the satisfaction of everybody, and now that I have hopes of being able to support a wife in the newer [sic] future, I humbly beg you to consider me as a possible suitor for your hand.

(NAA: ST1233/1, N61798)

The letter induced the Security Service to question Isobel about her association with Joseph. Although she and Joseph attended the same church, she denied having a close friendship with him. She also 'keenly resented this Japanese writing to her and expressed her repugnance at the terms of endearment expressed' (NAA: ST1233/1, N61798). She couldn't explain why he had sent her such a letter, suggesting that Joseph may be 'to some degree, mentally deranged'. Isobel's

mother revealed that Joseph had once visited their home and requested Isobel write to him while he was in the AIF. She hoped official steps would be taken to ‘prevent any correspondence from Suzuki reaching her daughter’. Constable Malone concluded in his report that ‘there would appear to be no doubt that the explanations supplied by Miss Watts and her mother can be accepted and their suggestion that Suzuki is suffering from hallucinations is probably correct. If such is the case, he is not a fit subject to be considered for release’ (NAA: ST1233/1, N61798).

Joseph was transferred to Loveday in May 1943, along with his stepfather and Sam Nakashiba. Spurned by his love interest, rejected by his country and with little hope for a release, Joseph’s mental state deteriorated. In July the following year, he was hospitalised again, this time in Barmera. The medical officer at Loveday reported: ‘Continued internment will, in my opinion, cause the health of this internee to deteriorate to a large degree’ (NAA: A367, C60569). After Joseph returned to camp, he wrote to his aunt on August 2, 1944: ‘I must apologise for not writing for some time, but I have been in hospital for the past month or so. Now that I have recovered my health I feel that it is time to speak up and tell everyone what the present government has done to me... Even if I were an enemy alien I would still have a right to produce witnesses, books and documents and have a Tribunal hearing at a pre-arranged time and place. Instead of that, I was merely questioned at a moment’s notice, and refused a further hearing’ (NAA: ST1233/1, N61798). The same day, the director-general of security approved Joseph’s release ‘on medical grounds’, with restrictions on where he could work and live (NAA: A367, C60569).

Joseph settled back into life in Sydney, at pains to distance himself from the trauma of his internment and his Japanese origins. He naturalised in June 1945, at the age of twenty-three (Nagata 1996, p.108), and his ‘greatest ambition’ was to re-join the AIF (*Sunday Telegraph* 1945 in NAA: ST1233/1, N28869). He returned to work as a surveyor. Soon afterwards, he changed his surname to ‘Stacey’ (NAA: SP11/5, SUZUKI, JOSEPH). In his application, he wrote: ‘... my present surname

causes considerable embarrassment both to myself and my employers' (Nagata 1996, p. 108). With the change of his name, Joseph's dissociation from his Japanese heritage, in all but his appearance, was finally complete.

James (Jimmy) Chi

Born: Broome, 1903

Interned: Harvey (WA), Loveday (SA),

Woolenook (SA), Tatura (Victoria), 1941–46

In the late 1930s, restaurateur and taxi driver Jimmy Chi was a linchpin of the Broome community. With his friendly, can-do manner and multilingual ability (Wallace 2002), he moved among the Britishers, divers, drifters and indigenous population with apparent ease. Whether serving one of his refreshing lemon drinks (Wallace 2002), ladling steaming bowls of his family's famous long soup or transporting passengers in his '38 Chevrolet sedan, the curved chassis gleaming in the light, Jimmy was a ubiquitous and striking personality. He exemplified the town's diverse population and pioneering spirit more than any other.

Half-Chinese, half-Japanese Jimmy was born and raised in Broome. His father, John Chi, arrived in Australia from China as a 21-year-old ship's boy in 1870 (Shaw 2001, p. 21). He prospected for gold in Ballarat (Nagata 1996, p. 54), then moved to Cossack (WA), where he became involved in pearling. He naturalised in 1887, before the advent of the White Australia Policy (Shaw 2001, p. 21), then found his way to Broome in 1899, where he married Yae Yamamoto. Yae was a fellow adventurer who had run away from home in Kyushu, Japan in 1896, by stowing away in the coal bunker of a ship bound for Western Australia (Jones 2002, p. 167). They had five children, all born in Broome. Although John Chi was naturalised, he was refused a pearling licence due to his ethnicity. To overcome this, he registered his luggers under the name of a white business partner, who promptly disappeared, robbing John of most of his assets (Shaw 2001, p. 21). Chi senior gave up



on pearling and opened a long soup restaurant and boarding house in Broome. After his death in 1921 (Shaw 2001, p. 21), the rest of the family continued to work in the restaurant. Selina, Jimmy's elder sister, died of pneumonia while visiting Japan. Middle children Gertrude and Joseph both went to Japan as young adults and found employment there. Teresa, the youngest, married a Japanese employed at Tonan Shokai store in Broome, then moved overseas with him, first to Indonesia, then Japan. Only Jimmy, the eldest boy, never visited Japan. After his mother died in 1935, Jimmy was the only member of the clan left in Broome. Blessed with his father's entrepreneurial spirit, he began Broome's first taxi service, frequently transporting Japanese divers from place to place.

As a respected member of the community, Jimmy was often called upon as a go-between or to help out in a jam. According to Kenneth Wallace, a doctor in Broome from 1936 to 1939, Jimmy helped him communicate with Asian patients, and once, when his vehicle broke down a long way from Broome, Jimmy drove out to rescue him. 'Jimmy Chi was a good man in an emergency' (Wallace 2002).

But after Japan's entry into the war, the tables turned against him. Although Jimmy was Australian-born and only half-Japanese through his mother, he was arrested and interned in December 1941. According to Jimmy, 'The white people in town thought I was communicating with the Japs and [that] my brother was in the Japanese Air Force... I packed up my stuff and they put me in gaol... I couldn't do anything... My wife and son were still here in Broome and my business was just left sitting' (Nagata 1996, p. 73).

Army records indicate he was interned due to his perceived Japanese sympathies and the risk he posed with his Japanese language ability and a vehicle at his disposal. 'It is submitted that Chi is a Japanese in all but name, and his sympathies would undoubtedly be with the enemy. Being allowed complete freedom of movement, the use of his wireless set and all privileges, he is regarded as a danger to national security. His sentiments and knowledge of the Japanese language would certainly serve the enemy in good stead in the event of emergency. It is therefore recommended that he be interned' (NAA: MP508/1, 255/739/490).

During the four-and-a-half years of his internment, Jimmy was held in four different camps. Australian in his outlook, he had trouble interacting with the Japan-born internees, preferring to mix with other Australian-borns and military personnel. At Woolenook camp, not far from Loveday, tensions between the Australian-born Japanese and Japanese nationals escalated to the extent that homemade weapons were found in the Australian-borns' tent (Nagata 1996, p. 175).

Jimmy was released in October 1946. He was determined to rebuild his life in Broome, despite vehement opposition. At a 'stormy meeting' at the Broome Town Hall, one person suggested a boycott of Japanese businesses ('Broome Objects to Japs' Return' 1947). Upon his return, Jimmy found the town a different place. His house and restaurant had been burnt down, his taxi had been commandeered by the army and his equipment sold (Nagata 1996, p. 226). 'On Broome jetty, white people yelled at me. They said, "Why did you come back? No house to live in!"' (Nagata 1996, p. 226). Jimmy faced continued antagonism from many locals, the memory of Japan's four air raids (Nagata 1996, p. 226) no doubt fresh in their minds. '...I couldn't go out on the street. They had meetings at the RSL hall and Shire Council. They used to say, "Send the bastard to Japan"' (Nagata 1996, p. 227). Jimmy was unemployed for three years and forced to fish and collect cockles to feed his family. Broome's Japanese population had numbered about three hundred before the war, but only nine afterwards (Nagata 1996, p. 227), further compounding Jimmy's isolation. He was refused a union ticket, but after lodging a formal complaint in Perth, he got a ticket and found work.

Despite the hardships he suffered, Jimmy gradually regained acceptance within the community. He was one of the few former Japanese internees who publicly spoke about his experiences in the media (Nagata 1996, p. 226). He worked at the Broome jetty until he retired. His son, also called Jimmy Chi, is a well-known composer and playwright who wrote *Bran Nue Dae*.

Jimmy died in his hometown in 1993 at the age of 90. The alley where his father's restaurant was located is still known as John Chi Lane.

Unearthing the Past: Silence and testimony in Japan

On 7 July 1989, the air was thick with heat in the Toyama district of Tokyo. *Tsuyu*, the rainy season, had just ended, leaving the atmosphere dense. At the former government health building location, a large pit was being dug for the new National Hygiene and Disease Prevention Research Centre. The workers buzzed around the site, their foreheads glistening in the sun. The excavation was strenuous, dirty work, but it would soon be complete. The mechanical digger plunged deep into the earth, scraping against



rock as it brought up a mound of dirt. Something pale shone through the soil. At first, it looked like pieces of ceramic. On closer inspection, the workers realised it was human bones.

Twenty-four years later, their identities are still unknown.



In a city famed for skyscrapers and neon lights, Toyama is a quiet pocket in an urban jungle. Situated in the heart of Tokyo, only thirty minutes by foot from the world's busiest train station, Shinjuku, it spans a wide area, bordered by busy Meiji Road at one end and prestigious Waseda University at the other. In between lies residential housing, several schools, a public library, a Buddhist temple, the National Center for Global Health and Medicine and acres of leafy parkland. Hundreds of years ago, a lavish garden built by a feudal lord occupied the area, with rolling landscapes, paths and countless ponds. Now, at least a dozen public housing blocks crowd the edges of the park, casting long shadows across the gravel.

Like most of metropolitan Japan, Toyama is full of contradictions. It is a place where the indigent and the upper middle class live side-by-side. Where some of Tokyo's busiest roads and most peaceful parks share space. In this suburb, an ancient Shinto shrine dedicated to gods of war is a short walk from the Women's Active Museum on War and Peace, committed to exposing wartime violence and enabling justice for victims.

My first visit to Toyama was on 1 March 2013, at the start of spring. The grass was tawny and the ground was thick with dry leaves, but I occasionally spied tiny green buds on the branches of trees. The sky was a blanket of white, offering no clues as to what conditions the future would bring. Mothers pushed prams through the park and up gently sloping alleys crowded with dwellings. Now and then, a door creaked or the murmur of a television sounded from within.

The idyllic snapshot of suburban life is worlds apart from Toyama's former identity as a hub of military operations during the Asia-Pacific War. Seventy years ago, the neighbourhood was home to a mounted regiment, the Toyama Military Academy and the Tokyo Army Medical College. The



latter was a collection of buildings within a high-security gated compound, where the Imperial Army's medical elite, academics and politicians gathered to share research and hold secret talks about Japan's expansion into East Asia (Torii & Nasu 2013).

Few relics of that past remain. When Japan lost the war, the buildings were abandoned and many were eventually destroyed. The only structure still standing is a stone edifice that was once the meeting room of the Toyama Military Academy. It now forms the basement of the United Church of Christ, which was built after the war.

The area's unusual past would have remained in relative obscurity, if not for the accidental unearthing of the bones in 1989. News of the discovery of at least thirty-five human skulls prompted speculation. Some wondered if they were the victims of unsolved murders, while others thought they were the casualties of wartime raids or the 1923 Great Kanto earthquake (Hartcher 1989). Kanagawa University history professor Keiichi Tsuneishi was one of the first to suggest ties to Japan's covert biological warfare program during World War II (Greimel 2002). Tsuneishi, whose earliest work on the subject was published in 1981, had heard

of a special department known as the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory located within the Army Medical College (Yamaguchi 1991). He was quick to draw links to Unit 731, the secret unit of the Army Medical College that developed biological weapons and experimented on living humans, starting in 1932 in the Japanese colony of Manchuria, and later in Guangzhou, Beijing and Singapore. The unit conducted tests on bubonic plague, anthrax, cholera, typhus, smallpox, botulism and poison gas. Infected victims were vivisected to observe the progress of disease—sometimes without anaesthetic. Test subjects were referred to as *maruta*, or ‘logs’, originally as a joke because the Unit 731 compound was disguised as a lumber mill, then the term persisted (Gold 1996, p. 40). Victims were political dissidents, common criminals and sometimes poor farmers. They included the elderly, infants and pregnant women. In one experiment, a Russian mother and her daughter were put in a gas chamber as doctors peered through a window and timed their convulsions, noting how the woman sprawled over her child in a futile effort to save her (Kristof 1995). About 3000 people were directly killed in the experiments at the Unit 731 compound alone (Tsuneishi 1994). Japanese forces also deposited wheat, rice and cotton riddled with disease-infected fleas near communities (Watts 2002), and released typhoid and cholera into village wells (Kristof 1995). The total death toll resulting from the spread of disease is estimated to be between 250,000 and 300,000 (McCurry 2011), but some researchers put it as high as 580,000 (Barenblatt 2004, p. xii).



I became interested in the unidentified remains of Toyama while researching a possible plot development for my novel. My main character, I knew from the beginning, harboured a dark secret from his past. But *what* that secret was I’d been trying to uncover for more than a year. While at a writing retreat in the Blue Mountains, I remembered reading about Japan’s human experimentation during the war. A Google search delivered the name the program is now known by, Unit

731 (the name of the largest facility in Manchuria), then I stumbled on an article about the unearthed bones in Tokyo. As I read, a chill coursed through me. The bones were linked to a secret Unit 731-related laboratory within the Army Medical College.



But my interest in the bones runs deeper than that: as the daughter of a Japanese immigrant, I have long been drawn to stories about Japan. In some ways, unravelling the mystery of the bones is my attempt to decipher a culture that is at once both familiar and unknown to me. Although I have lived in Japan several times since my childhood, I have always remained an outsider. Confronting the silences of Japan is a way of piecing together my cultural heritage.

So I went to Japan to meet the unofficial guardians of the bones—concerned citizens who have no direct connection to the remains, but who have taken it upon themselves to see that justice is served. I had envisaged them as modern-day Robin Hoods, so I was surprised to discover they are almost all middle-aged men: teachers, lawyers and security guards, either retired or approaching retirement. They are a far cry from the dreadlocked, gung-ho activists I had marched with

during my undergraduate years.

As I approached the north exit of JR Okubo station, two greying men waited for me among the salarymen and shopping bag-wielding *obasan*. Yasushi Torii and Shigeo Nasu have dedicated much of the past two decades to exposing Japan's wartime atrocities and assisting war victims. Torii, 54, a part-time high school biology teacher, first heard about the unearthed bones while volunteering for a care organisation for disabled people in Shinjuku. One of his volunteering



colleagues, Noboru Watanabe (who passed away in 2012), told him human remains had been dug up near his apartment in Toyama that were thought to be linked to Japan's biological warfare program. In 1991, Watanabe joined a group of concerned citizens on a trip to China to learn more about Japan's biological warfare program. They met families of Unit 731 victims and attended an exhibition about the unit. He returned the following year, and Torii went with him. 'Back then, I didn't really know anything about the bones, I just followed. That was actually my very first overseas trip. Of course, after listening to the voices of the local people, I was shocked. From then on, I decided to be actively involved' (Torii

& Nasu 2013). Torii is now the president of the Association Demanding Investigation Into the Human Remains Found at the Former Army Medical College Site, a citizens' group founded by his friend Watanabe and several others. 'The group's primary aim is to return the bones back to their families, or if the family can't be determined, at least back to their home country.' Since 1996, the association has been conducting annual walking tours for the public to visit sites related to Japan's secret wartime past. The walk usually takes place in early April, while the cherry blossoms are in full bloom, but Torii and Nasu agreed to guide me during my short trip to Tokyo on the cusp of winter and spring.

Nasu, 62, is a member of the Centre for Victims of Biological Warfare, an organisation campaigning for recognition, an apology and compensation from the Japanese government. The group also aims to educate people and bring to light other details of Japan's biological warfare program, such as the use of poison gas. Now retired, Nasu was working as a security guard at a hospital when he heard about families of Unit 731 victims' compensation claim at the Tokyo district court. 'Since I worked the night shift, I had plenty of time during the day, so I decided to support them... Once you know only a little about this war, you're forced to want to get involved to do something about it' (Torii & Nasu 2013).

A mild wind blew as Torii, Nasu and I set off from Okubo station. Our final destination was the National Hygiene and Disease Prevention Research Centre in Toyama, where the bones currently rest inside a granite monument. Torii, with his round face and cheerful demeanour, is the more outgoing of the two. He quickly took the lead, charging ahead to point out places of interest. Nasu, in square spectacles and navy windcheater, kept to the back of our small group, often wandering off to inspect this or that. On the main street of Okubo, home to bustling Korea Town, signs advertising Korean barbecue and massage parlours flashed thinly in the morning light. We stopped in front of an ordinary-looking Japanese funeral parlour—a slightly cheap one, perhaps, given its location among the sleazier establishments. The window displayed three wooden altars with double doors open to

reveal Buddha figurines inside. My grandfather had an altar just like these in his home on the outskirts of Tokyo. It was in memory of my grandmother, who had passed away before I was born. I remembered my grandfather's anger when, as a child, I knocked over a bowl of water on the altar, disturbing my grandmother's spirit.

Torii gestured to the funeral parlour. 'This is the place where people who die in Shinjuku ward who can't be identified are kept. In 1989, after the bones were found, they were stored in the basement here until March 2002, when they were interred inside the monument.' I calculated in my head: thirteen years.

The story of the bones is a long one. Even now, twenty-four years after they were discovered, it is still unresolved. The reason, as I learned from Torii, Nasu and others, is complex: the accumulation of a number of court cases and appeals, combined with ordinary bureaucratic delays and an extraordinary lack of institutional cooperation. After the bones were discovered, the police investigated the remains and found they belonged to men and women who had died at least twenty years earlier, and that there was no evidence of violent crime (Yamaguchi 1991). They concluded that even if the deceased had been victims of crime, they had been buried for more



than fifteen years, so the statute of limitations had passed (Tsuneishi 2007, p. 77). The police dropped the case and public interest waned. The Ministry of Health and Welfare, on whose property the remains were found, agitated for a cremation (Woodruff 1992), as is custom in Japan. With that, the inconvenient discovery would have been finally dispatched. Yet the Shinjuku ward local government refused to drop the matter, repeatedly requesting the ministry launch a full investigation. Each time, they were refused. ‘We have no obligation to investigate just because we own the land,’ said ministry official Nobuhisa Inoue (Yamaguchi 1991). In a rare act of defiance, the then-mayor of Shinjuku, Katsutada Yamamoto, launched an independent investigation using local government funds (Kawamura 2013). He approached world-renowned physical anthropologist Hajime Sakura, director of human research at the National Science Museum.

‘Professor Sakura was really interested in doing it, but the head of the museum denied, saying it was out of the scope of the museum. But I’m not sure it was the real reason,’ Torii explained, hinting that other forces were at work. On the advice of the Human Remains association, Shinjuku ward next approached specialists at Jikei University School of Medicine in Tokyo and St Marianna University School of Medicine in Kanagawa. ‘In both those cases, the individuals were willing to do it, but the universities denied.’

It seemed whichever way they turned, they were met with silence.



A few days earlier, on a wet winter’s day, I met Kazuyuki Kawamura, a former Shinjuku ward assemblyman who was in office at the time of the bones’ discovery. As I walked to his workplace in Shinjuku, cold rain pelted down and touched my skin through my jacket. Kawamura, 61, greeted me with a smile. His genial, placid manner was echoed in the soft planes of his face. The room was lined with shelves stacked high with books, folders and cardboard boxes. Desks laden with paper crowded the middle of the room.

While the foyers of commercial buildings in Japan are uniformly stark and clean, almost every office I have visited is a domain of disarray, seemingly at odds with the Japan of carefully controlled tea ceremonies and minimalist design. Homes reflect a similar divide: the sitting room, where guests are received, are ordered and aesthetically harmonious, while the rest of the house is often chaotic. The tidy exterior versus the cluttered interior points to the dichotomy at the heart of Japanese culture: the conflict between *honne* (personal feelings



and desires) and *tatemae* (public facade). In Kawamura's office, the clutter was a comfort, especially as it was warm inside on that rainy day. A middle-aged woman took my wet jacket and placed it on one of the piles of paper, then returned to her work.

As we sat down at the hodgepodge of desks, Kawamura described the tension in the ward office as officials deliberated over what to do about the 'troublesome' discovery. They believed the ministry should manage the site, but the ministry's refusal to conduct an investigation played on their conscience. Hoping to learn more, Kawamura joined the

1991 research tour to China. 'Some families [that we met] claimed the bones found in Shinjuku could be their relatives... That was the start of my interest in the human remains' (Kawamura 2013).

Soon afterwards, the Shinjuku local government office announced it would pursue an independent investigation—a decision that Kawamura described as 'very courageous'. 'Usually, when the local government requests the national government to do something and they refuse, the local government

goes no further. But in this case, they decided to launch an investigation themselves. Using the local government budget [to do that] was unthinkable.’

Shinjuku ward’s first choice to analyse the remains, anthropologist Hajime Sakura, eventually agreed to the project—but only after his retirement from the National Science Museum. He carried out the research in the basement of the funeral parlour in Okubo, where the bones were stored. In April 1992, he reported his findings: in addition to the thirty-five easily recognisable skulls, there were 132 skull fragments, thirty spines, six chest bones, thirteen thigh bones and seventeen neck bones (Woodruff 1992) from at least sixty-two and possibly more than a hundred people (‘Bones show Japan may have done surgical experiments on Chinese’ 1992). The remains were from Mongoloid men and women who had died ‘from several tens of, to one hundred years’ earlier (Gold 1996, p. 127). More than ten skulls had holes from bullets or drills, and cuts from ‘perhaps Japanese swords’ made after death (‘Bones show Japan may have done surgical experiments on Chinese’ 1992). He also found evidence of experimental surgery or surgical practice, as most of the skulls bore scalpel or saw marks (Tsuneishi 2007), but he could not prove a definitive link to Unit 731, as the bones did not show any particular signs of disease. He concluded that it was ‘likely that the bones were sent from China’ (Woodruff 1992).

Following Sakura’s report, the Ministry of Health and Welfare agreed to launch an investigation to determine the origin of the bones. They began conducting interviews and questionnaires with former Army Medical College personnel. But then Shinjuku ward did an about-face, announcing its wish to cremate the bones. The new mayor, Takashi Onda, believed that as a definitive link to Unit 731 had not been found and ‘since there is nobody [i.e., relatives] who can claim the remains’ (Gold 1996, p. 137), they should be cremated according to law—a move that Kawamura, by then active in the citizens’ movement to protect the bones, opposed. ‘By cremating the bones, we would lose the evidence—that was what we feared most. At that point, I realised we needed some kind of movement.’

In 1997, together with activists representing ‘comfort

women' (sexual slaves) and forced labourers (mainly Chinese and Koreans used as slave labour by the Japanese military and some Japanese companies), he formed the Citizens for the Investigation of WWII Issues—a group that aims 'to verify from a neutral point of view the victims of the war' (Kawamura 2013). They proposed to establish an independent bureau to investigate forced labour, sexual slavery and biological warfare, but parliament never discussed their proposal. 'We repeatedly submitted it, but it was never enacted.'

Like many of the people I interviewed in Japan, Kawamura has long been involved in grassroots politics. As a university student, he protested against the Japan-United States security treaty renewal in 1970, demanding the removal of American troops in Okinawa. He joined the socialist party and in 1979 was elected to Shinjuku local government, where he served for twenty years. Kawamura was born in 1952, a few years after his father returned from China, where he had fought during the war. 'At the start of the war, my father was an English teacher at a girls' school. He and the other teachers were summoned to the war zone in China. It was a form of conscription—they couldn't refuse.'

I wondered whether his father's military past impelled Kawamura to seek justice for war victims. But he told me the reverse actually occurred:

Because I became involved in these issues as a student, I decided to ask my father about his experience... He talked to me about it. He didn't even want to go to war, but he was forced to. During his training in China, he was ordered to use a bayonet to kill Chinese people [for practice].

(Kawamura 2013)

I froze. I had read about Japanese soldiers practising bayonet technique on Chinese prisoners before, but hearing it in those terms—someone's father, who had previously been an English teacher at a girls' school—stopped me cold. I tried to imagine one of the teachers at my all-girls high school being sent to war and then having to spear a helpless prisoner. Mr Hartley, or diffident Mr Lacey. It was impossible to conceive.

Kawamura continued speaking about his father, who was

captured as a POW and forced to do hard labour at a coal mine in the former Soviet Union for three years after the end of the war. He passed away recently at the age of 92, six months before the Japanese parliament finally enacted a bill to compensate former POWs interned in the Soviet Union. Despite the sincerity of Kawamura's words, I was having trouble keeping up with what he was saying. I could not stop thinking about what it would be like to face another human being one moment, then drive a bayonet into his chest the next. I struggled to imagine it, let alone put it into words. I tried to steer Kawamura back to his prior revelation, such was the effect it had had on me.

'Did your father's experience in China affect him deeply?'

Kawamura considered my question for a moment, his left eyelid drooping in concentration.

'I don't think he was that affected. He spoke about his stories quite calmly.'



Torii, Nasu and I stepped from the backstreets of Okubo onto Meiji Road. As we waited for the lights to change, vehicles cruised past us at the measured pace typical of the traffic-choked city. On the other side of the road, petrol station attendants in matching maroon jackets and caps converged like a flock of birds as they directed traffic in and out of the small space, bowing in unison as the cars exited. 'It is quite beautiful here during sakura season,' Torii remarked. I looked at the line of trees abutting the road. In a few weeks' time, the suburb would be awash with tourists eager to see the pink and white blossoms, but as I gazed up at them, their spidery branches were stark against the sky.

We crossed Meiji Road and entered the outskirts of Toyama. A path bordered by a green hedge guided us towards the park. From somewhere to our right, the chatter of school children reached us on the wind. I felt a shift in the atmosphere as we left the concrete matrix of urban Tokyo behind.

We began to climb the road that snaked upwards through the greenery. Torii and Nasu displayed a robustness defying



their years, charging ahead while I struggled to keep up. We stopped at a dusty expanse, coated with gravel and bordered by low shrubs and trees. There was hardly a soul in sight.

‘See that tall tree?’ Torii pointed to a lone zelkova in the middle of the expanse. ‘That’s the probable former location of the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory.’

The Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory, located on the grounds of the Army Medical College, was Shiro Ishii’s Tokyo base and the hub of his biological warfare empire. Ishii established it in 1932 as a facility to develop biological weapons (Tsuneishi 2010, p. 23). Even within the highly secure Army Medical College, access to the laboratory was restricted—especially the basement area, where bacteria for weapons were thought to be grown (Gunji 1982, p. 108). Ishii’s initial experiments went well, but he wasn’t sure whether they would work in the field, so he pursued human testing (Harris 2002, p. 23). Aware of the limitations of being based in Japan, Ishii looked to the new Japanese colony of Manchuria in northern China, and opened his first overseas base in Harbin in 1932. The Tokyo laboratory remained in operation under the supervision of Ryoichi Naito (Torii & Nasu 2013), one of Ishii’s brightest recruits, as Ishii concentrated

on expanding his empire in China. Little is known of the inner workings of the laboratory, but the 1989 discovery of the bones in Toyama stimulated speculation. Historians such as Keiichi Tsuneishi believed the bodies of murdered test subjects were sent from China to the Tokyo laboratory for further analysis (Tsuneishi 2007, p. 78). But as Sakura's analysis of the remains did not find a definitive link to Unit 731, and with no witnesses to confirm it, the connection remained conjecture.

In 2001, the Ministry of Health and Welfare finally released its report on the remains, almost ten years after it announced it would pursue an investigation. Based on interviews and questionnaires completed by 368 former personnel, the ministry determined the corpses were likely used by the college for educational purposes (Nakamura 2004). The report raised the possibility that some of the bodies were transported from war zones, but did not offer a reason for this (Nakamura 2004). In a win for the Human Remains association, the report recommended the bones be preserved rather than cremated (Kawamura 2013), but it concluded they were not connected to Unit 731 and there was no need to further investigate (McCurry 2011). On a rainy day on 27 March 2002, the remains were finally moved from the funeral parlour in Okubo and ceremoniously interred beneath a three-foot-high granite repository on the grounds of the National Hygiene and Disease Prevention Research Centre. 'These are human remains, not just any object. It's only appropriate to pay due respects,' ministry official Makoto Haraguchi said (Greimel 2002). By interring the bones, he no doubt hoped to close a difficult chapter in the ministry's history.

The controversy may have waned at that point, if not for 84-year-old Toyo Ishii (no relation to Shiro Ishii). Ishii was in her early twenties when she was employed at the Army Medical College as a nurse in the oral surgery department (BBC 2011). Ishii broke decades of silence when she revealed she was ordered to dispose of corpses, body parts and bones in the final weeks of the war as American forces approached. 'We took the samples out of the glass containers and dumped

them into the hole,' she wrote in a statement released in June 2006. 'We were going to be in trouble, I was told, if American soldiers asked us about the specimens' (Yamaguchi 2006). Ishii said she was never involved in nor knew about experiments on humans, but often saw body parts in glass jars and bodies floating in pools of formalin in the hospital's three morgues (Yamaguchi 2006). She identified two other areas near the Army Medical College where she was instructed to dispose of the bodies (Lloyd-Parry 2011).

Ishii's testimony, more than anything else I had read about Unit 731, struck a chord. I was fascinated by the internal and external forces that conspire to keep someone silent. With the protagonist of my novel in mind, I wondered about the motivation to speak out after maintaining secrecy for so long. Was it redemption, or something more than that? Surely the shame of admitting one's role in past atrocities would outweigh the relief. The images of the frail, white-haired woman I saw online belied the courage of Ishii's act.

Ishii first began to talk about her war memories in 1998, when Shinjuku ward began gathering war crime testimonies (Torii & Nasu 2013). After she spoke about her employment at the Army Medical College, members of the Human Remains association and the Minister for Health and Welfare, Jiro Kawasaki, arranged to meet her. 'I don't think Ishii originally intended to proactively testify. Even when meeting us, she showed trepidation... I think she was a rather conservative person,' Torii said. Ishii regretted the remains' hasty disposal and wanted some sort of monument created for them. 'I think the reason Minister Kawasaki agreed to meet with her was because she did not intend to seek retribution for those responsible' (Torii & Nasu 2013). She was happy after the monument was erected, and passed away in February 2012, at the age of 89.

Toyo Ishii was not the only one to testify. Several dozen Japanese have shared their stories about their involvement in Japan's biological warfare program. In 1982, Yoko Gunji wrote *Shogen: 731 Ishii Butai* ('*Eyewitness: Unit 731*'), an account of her time working as a quality control inspector at the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory, overseeing

the production of ceramic parts for water purifying machines invented by Shiro Ishii. Although her knowledge was limited, she suspected Japan was cultivating plague germs to use in the war, due to the huge amounts of agar used in the basement laboratory, much more than what was needed for research (Gunji 1982, p. 115).

As part of the Unit 731 exhibition that Torii and Nasu helped to stage in 1993, many former Unit 731 members publicly vocalised their experience for the first time. Ken Yuasa spoke at several locations about his time as a young army doctor in China. ‘This is not easy for me to speak about, but it is something I must confess,’ he began. ‘What I did was wrong. It is also true that it was forced on me by the government, but that does not reduce the size of my crime’ (Gold 1996, p. 205). Yuasa described the first time he vivisected a man, an old Chinese farmer. Despite his revulsion, he went through with it, saying he had always been the type of person to follow orders:

If you made a disagreeable face [at being ordered to do a vivisection], when you returned home you would be called a traitor or a turncoat. If it were just me alone, I could tolerate it; but the insulting looks would be cast on parents and siblings. Even if one despises an act, one must bear it... That was my first crime. After that, it was easy. Eventually I dissected fourteen Chinese.

(Gold 1996, p. 209–210)

In Japan, bringing shame to oneself, one’s kinship and one’s brotherhood is a major deterrent to testimony. As Media scholar Philip Seaton points out: ‘although people have silent knowledge of Japanese aggression, it is a taboo to talk about it’ (Seaton 2007, p. 194). Ruth Benedict’s *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946) is now considered outdated, yet it provides fascinating analysis of the wartime mind and culture of the Japanese. Benedict defines Japan as a shame-driven honour culture, in which behaviour is determined by social standards rather than personal values. In such a model, group membership is of utmost importance. Shame ‘more often paralyses rather than makes them start a fight.

In such a situation, one has to either use the experience to drive oneself to the impossible, or to let it eat out one's heart' (Benedict 1996, p. 164). Such paralysis was common in many former Unit 731 members in postwar Japan: unable to speak out for fear of bringing shame to themselves, their families and their colleagues, the unspeakable memories continued to 'eat out' their hearts.

The Japanese people's devotion to Emperor Hirohito, who was considered a god, was one of their chief motivations during the war, even in the face of extreme self-sacrifice and adversity. '[T]he Emperor was a symbol of loyalty far surpassing a flag' (Benedict 1996, p. 129). Primary schools were tasked with grooming students to become 'children of the Emperor' who would sacrifice themselves for the nation (Cook 1992, p. 172). Although the Emperor renounced his divinity when Japan lost the war, fealty to him remained strong in the post-war decades. His death in 1989, exactly six months before the discovery of the bones, may have been the final impetus for former Unit 731 members to speak out.

Toyo Ishii's disclosure prompted the ministry to conduct an excavation in 2011 with the specific intent to find more buried human remains. But after a comprehensive dig that lasted months, no remains were found—only plaster casts and prosthetic limbs used by the adjacent hospital (Torii & Nasu 2013), eerily symbolic of the human body parts that activists hoped to find.



We emerged from the park into the open area surrounding Toyama Heights public housing apartments, where Torii's friend and colleague Noboru Watanabe used to live. A warm southerly whipped between the buildings, stirring up debris. I blinked against the dirt, my feet heavy as we walked into the wind. Torii paused in front of me and pointed to the sky. '*Haru ichiban.*' The first storm of spring. He continued marching forward, unaffected.

The National Center for Global Health and Medicine rose up to our left, a huge multi-storey complex. It was formerly

the First Imperial Army Hospital during the war (Sams 1998, p. 29). Personnel of the Army Medical College used to live just across the road, but little was evident of that past in the concrete high-rises and cement-rendered dwellings. The area was heavily bombed towards the end of the war, and the resulting firestorm destroyed most of the buildings and left at least 100,000 civilians dead (Selden 2007).

We momentarily lost our way in the narrow alleys between houses and apartment blocks before finding our target: the



site of Shiro Ishii's former apartment. Although I knew the original building was no longer standing, I was disappointed to detect nothing sinister in the curved staircase and off-white bricks of the low-rise block. Indeed, it looked a lot like the apartment I lived in with my family in Shibuya when I was a child. According to Torii, Ishii's descendants still live in the building. 'They used to have their surname, "Ishii", on the letterbox. But when we started doing the tours, they took it off.'

Shiro Ishii, dubbed the Josef Mengele of Japan, was the mastermind of Japan's biological warfare program. He was born in Chiba prefecture, about two hours from central Tokyo. His family were wealthy and influential, exercising a kind of

feudal dominance over the locality (Harris 2002, p. 14). This would prove useful in later years, as Ishii hand-picked many staff for the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory and other units from the population in his hometown, knowing they couldn't refuse or speak against him owing to their allegiance to his family (Gunji 1982, p. 26–29). From an early age, Ishii hoped to serve his country in the military (Harris 2002, p. 14). In 1920, less than a month after finishing his undergraduate medical degree, he joined the Imperial Army (Harris 2002, p. 15) and became an ardent supporter of the ultranationalist faction (Harris 2002, p. 17).

Ishii was a gifted pupil with an extraordinary memory and almost superhuman physical energy (Harris 2002, p. 15). His real brilliance, however, was his political shrewdness. Sycophantic to his superiors and domineering to his subordinates (Harris 2002, p. 16), Ishii was adept at manipulating others for his own benefit. A former teacher recalled that when Ishii was a postgraduate student at Kyoto Imperial University, he would infuriate other students by entering the laboratory at night and using the test tubes and other apparatus they had painstakingly cleaned, only to leave them dirty for his fellow students the next morning (Harris 2002, p. 16–17). His marriage to the daughter of the university president elevated his status and opened more doors (Gold 1996, p. 24).

In 1927, Ishii read a report that immediately piqued his interest, about the 1925 Geneva Protocol banning the use of chemical warfare. If it was banned, he reasoned, it must be powerful, and so began his lifelong interest in biological warfare research (Barenblatt 2004, p. 2). Ishii lobbied for the military to conduct research into germ warfare, but it wasn't until 1930 that the army leaders and political atmosphere were receptive to his requests. That year, he was appointed professor of immunology at the Tokyo Army Medical College and promoted to a major within the army (Harris 2002, p. 19), beginning his rapid advancement through the ranks as he was promoted every three years.

Ishii was regarded as both eccentric and brilliant. On at least one occasion, he brought a severed human head to a talk about his research. Although his research constituted a gross

reversal of the Hippocratic medical oath to ‘preserve life’, most of his colleagues and subordinates adored him ‘because of his exuberant personality, daring, and devil-may-care attitude, his obvious intelligence, and his intense patriotism’ (Harris 2002, p. 58). Although he had detractors, such as army Surgeon General Hiroshi Kambayashi, who labelled him an ‘ambitious boaster’, his opponents were in the minority (Harris 2002, p. 58). Amid the nationalist fervour of the new decade, Ishii was able to convince his superiors that biological warfare was the way of the future. In 1932, the dean of the Army Medical College, Chikahiko Koizumi, set aside funds and land to create a building for Ishii’s use (Harris 2002, p. 21). From there, Ishii expanded his biological warfare operation to Manchuria and then other parts of China and Singapore.



When I was 17 and a recent high school graduate, I went to Japan on exchange. I spent seven weeks studying Japanese with other Australian students in Nagoya, where I was hosted by a Japanese family, with whom I am still close. Although I was familiar with Japanese culture through my Japanese mother and my experience of living in Japan as a child, I was unprepared for many of the rules—and lack of—that governed social behaviour. Eating on the train or while walking was taboo, yet I was not expected to offer my seat to an elderly passenger. One memory from that time stands out. One day, while shopping with the other students, we came upon a crowd in the street gathered around two homeless men, one of whom was hitting the other’s head with a large traffic cone. Blood issued from the victim’s head as he lay motionless on the ground. None of the dozen or so people who had stopped to observe did or said anything. While we, a group of foreign teenagers, ran to the nearest police station, they continued to stand, mute, watching the incident unfold. It was as if, in the absence of a rule prescribing how to respond when one person attacked another in public, they *could not* respond, as they were locked into a certain mode of behaviour.

In the paper, ‘Japanese Pacifism: Problematic Memory’,

Mikyong Kim explores the conflicted nature of Japan's post-war collective memory, entangled as it is with Japan's multiple identities: Asia-Pacific aggressor, nuclear bombing victim and postwar pacifist advocate (Kim 2010). Referencing the ideas of psychologist Hayao Kawai, who situates his theory in ancient myths and fairytales, and sociologist Takeshi Ishida, who draws on Buddhist teachings, Kim cites the 'empty centre' at the core of Japanese mind and culture as the reason for the perceived Japanese moral ambiguity towards their wartime past:

The empty centre, asserts Ishida, embodies a situational logic for conflict avoidance, not necessarily conflict resolution. The end result is temporary pacification, not permanent reconciliation... Because aesthetic principles take higher priority in the Japanese mind than moral aspirations... tensions aroused by the cultural dichotomies of *tatemaie-honne* (front vs. honest inner feelings) and *omote-ura* (visible vs. hidden layers of self) are mitigated. In terms of Kawai and Ishida's mental topography, this is because they are resolved [sic] of the vacuous centre which filters out moralistic sentiments. The Japanese are therefore inclined to perform situationally appropriate actions divorced from genuine feelings... As the empty centre filters out the unpleasant engagements with one's own sins, difficult memories make the past unusable.

(Kim 2010, p. 54)

Japan has repeatedly been accused of 'historical amnesia' in relation to its wartime aggression (for example, Kristof 1998; Johnson 1986), due to the government's reluctance to officially apologise to victims, and also because of several history textbook controversies from the 1950s to today, in which ministry-approved textbooks were censored or revised to downplay Japan's aggression in Asia. Yet certain trends in the population run counter to this idea of wilful forgetting. Seiichi Morimura's book about Unit 731, *Akuma No Hoshoku* ('*The Devil's Gluttony*', 1981), became a bestseller in Japan, selling 1.5 million copies and catapulting Japan's biological warfare program into mainstream consciousness (Harris 1994, p. 116). From July 1993 until December 1994, an exhibition about Unit 731 organised by Torii, Nasu and

others toured sixty-one locations in Japan and attracted more than 250,000 visitors (Harris 2002, p. xii). The popularity of these events indicate Japanese people are not amnesic, but are in fact deeply engaged with their wartime past.

The postwar trend to diminish and conceal past atrocities, and the more recent movement to expose and learn more about Japan's conflicted past reflect a schism within society. Seaton argues for a pluralistic view—one that highlights the diversity of contested war memories in Japan, rather than one that assumes 'that there is a typically "Japanese" way of looking back at the war, or that there is a dominant cultural narrative in Japan' (Seaton 2007, p. 4). '[T]he term "memory rifts" symbolises the divisions deep beneath the surface that shape the landscape of Japanese war memories. There are ideological fault lines within Japanese society. In particular, there is a rift between, on the one hand, liberal Japanese ("progressives", *shinpoha*), who see apology and atonement for the past as the best way to restore self-respect and international trust; and on the other hand conservatives, who see a positive version of history and commemoration of the sacrifice of the war generation as the best way to achieve national pride' (Seaton 2007, p. 8).

I can think of no better example of this struggle between forgetting and remembrance, tradition and progression, than the wrangling over the bones.



My second visit to Tokyo to research the human remains occurred over a stretch of days in early May 2013, when the city was in the full thrust of spring. Vegetation crowded the parks in near-violent abundance. Sparrows chirped among the bushes. Children dawdled on their way home from school, woozy in the sun. The drab palette and brisk wind of two months previous had vanished. Tokyo was a different being; the city felt entirely new.

With my surroundings rinsed clean of winter's torpor, I met Norio Minami, the lawyer engaged in the lawsuit to halt the cremation of the bones. His office was a short stroll from

Shinjuku Gyoen—the stunning, manicured park with elaborate Japanese and European-style gardens that was once the domain of a feudal lord.

As the first human rights lawyer I had ever met, Minami was not what I expected. I had envisaged a gruff, sports jacket-wearing type; mentally sharp yet weary from the vicissitudes of life. With his thick, slightly-wavy hair and trim navy suit, Minami looked more like a classical composer—a Japanese Mozart, who I could picture in tails on the podium, conduct-



ing an orchestra. Throughout the two hours we spent talking, Minami was earnest and unfailingly polite. He often paused while searching for the right words, a dreamy expression on his face.

As we sat inside a partitioned enclosure within his office, Minami explained he became involved in the case of the human remains through his interest in the civilian activism movement. Through his contacts, a group of concerned citizens, headed by Keiichi Tsuneishi and whose members included Torii, approached him. Local governments in Japan are legally obliged to cremate unidentified bodies, and the group wanted to take legal action to prevent that outcome.

‘I knew from the beginning we wouldn’t win the case... But by raising the issue we thought we could get public attention and make people aware of the fact there were many human bones found that remain unidentified... and by that, stop the cremation’ (Minami 2013).

Minami, 58, contacted former Unit 731 members to gather evidence for the case. One of the people he approached was Mr Okada [name has been changed to conceal his identity at Minami’s request], who had an administrative role within the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory. In the postwar years, Okada had become involved in the peace, democracy and antinuclear movements, and so he initially cooperated with Minami. At the first few meetings, Okada talked about the unit’s experiments with bacteria and rats, but he didn’t say anything about human experimentation. It wasn’t until the third or fourth interview that Okada divulged he was involved in human experimentation in China:

He eventually revealed to me he killed people... This was a fact he never disclosed to anyone else, not even his family members... his wife, kids—nobody... When I later asked for permission to include that part in his statement, he became vague, saying, ‘I don’t really remember...’

(Minami 2013)

Okada had agreed to testify in court, but on the day he was due to appear, he said he wasn’t feeling well and couldn’t go. He eventually provided a written statement that made no mention of human experimentation. ‘I’m sure he really wanted to confess. It must have been a weight on his heart for a very long time... I’m sure he wanted to, but he could not. People were pushed into such a situation because the government did not admit what happened. That led me to be involved in the lawsuit to sue the government for not admitting the atrocities’ (Minami 2013).

I asked Minami whether he pitied the Unit 731 members because he felt they had no choice. He looked down, deep in thought. Strain showed in the folds of skin around his eyes. ‘That is a very difficult question,’ he said.

If I look at the situation from a third-person point of view, I think: there must have been other ways. But if I put myself in the shoes of the former members, if I were really there—I don't know. There is a high possibility I would have committed the same things. I have interviewed many former Unit 731 members who told me they eventually became numb... I can't say I would not turn into one of those people... Humans are weak. You never know what you might do.

(Minami 2013)

In the low hum of his office, filled with the murmur of voices, the whir of the copier and the occasional trill of telephones, Minami reflected on the silences of the past—silences decreed by institutions and enacted by individuals. He grew up ignorant of the Japanese Army's war crimes, as they were not described in any textbooks and were never officially admitted by the Japanese government. 'If you talk to people, everyone knows it existed. But most of the former members decided to hide the fact and take it to the grave with them' (Minami 2013). Through the judicial process, Minami hoped to foster relief by encouraging perpetrators to speak out. 'I knew [the former Unit 731 members] were suffering... [T]hey were suffering because of their guilt and they couldn't speak out. I wanted to release them, in a way.'

In 1995, Minami filed a compensation claim at the Tokyo District Court on behalf of families of Chinese victims of Unit 731 experimentation. Through his involvement in the case, Minami became close to several of the plaintiffs:

There is one woman whose husband was sent to Unit 731 for experimentation... When we visited the place where she was tortured by the Japanese military police, she insisted I stay at her house because, she said, 'You're my son.' There is another lady who was a victim of the Nanjing massacre. When I interviewed her, her son came. During the interview, the son said something to his mother, and she started berating him. I asked the interpreter what they were talking about. Apparently the son said, 'Since we need to buy medicine and other necessities, maybe you should ask him for some money.' She rejected the idea immediately and told her son to get out of the room, which he did.

These were the moments when I felt what I had been doing paid off. There were many moments when I wanted to quit. There were times I spent more money than I earned. But these encounters, these relationships and the feeling of connection has been invaluable... this comes from human relationships and the fact we believe in each other.

(Minami 2013)

The court rejected the compensation claim in 2002, on the grounds that China waived its rights to war reparations when it signed the 1972 Japan-China peace treaty, establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. Despite the plaintiffs' loss, they achieved one breakthrough: the court acknowledged the existence of Unit 731 and its 'cruel and inhumane' activities in China—the first time a court in Japan had done so (Green 2002).

The legal team appealed the ruling, but the case was eventually rejected by the Supreme Court. Despite this, Minami remains optimistic change will come. He formed the Association to Support the Families of Victims of Unit 731 in 2008, with the aim to continue to gather and disseminate information about Japan's wartime atrocities. 'I think Japanese people are the kind of people who will feel guilt and responsibility for their actions. But it has not happened because they don't know that real human beings were involved. As long as they get that firsthand information from people involved, I think they will get it... That is my belief.'

One of the reasons Japan has hitherto failed to come to terms with its past atrocities is that many of the perpetrators of war crimes returned to positions of power. 'Germany was able to carry out objective war compensation, because none of the former Nazi members became a part of the regime after the war. Whereas in Japan, those responsible for wartime atrocities remained within the regime' (Minami 2013). An example of this continuation of power is the current conservative prime minister of Japan, Shinzo Abe, who is the grandson of Nobusuke Kishi, prime minister from 1957–60. As a member of Japan's war cabinet, Kishi oversaw the forced conscription of hundreds of thousands of Korean and Chinese labourers. He spent three years in prison as a suspected Class-A war

criminal but was never tried (Schaller 1995). ‘Another reason was Germany was surrounded by developed countries that demanded Germany’s responsibility for the war. Whereas Japan was surrounded by developing Asian countries, so the pressure was relatively low. Japan was a large economic power, so the other Asian countries thought they had to put up with Japan’s refusal to make amends for its past actions’ (Minami 2013). Japan’s nuclear bomb victim identity further complicated matters, as international pressure on Japan to make amends for its wartime aggression was diminished due to the bomb’s devastating legacy.

Shiro Ishii and others connected to Japan’s biological warfare program escaped prosecution through a secret immunity deal with the United States. At the end of the war, with the Russians poised to invade Manchuria, Ishii instructed staff at the units to kill remaining prisoners, destroy all evidence of experimentation and dynamite the compounds (Gold 1996, p. 232). Plague-infested rats were released into local areas, causing an outbreak of the disease that eventually killed 30,000 people (Harris 2002, p. 100). Ishii returned to Japan, where he spent several years in hiding and even fabricated a story that he had been shot dead (Harris 2002, p. 177). Meanwhile, tensions between the US and the Soviet Union were rising, with both nations eager to access data from Japan’s biological warfare research to use for their own military advantage. The US brokered a deal first, agreeing to exempt the leaders from prosecution for war crimes in exchange for the data (Harris 2002, p. 271). Edwin Hill, the chief of US Army Chemical Corps at Fort Detrick in Maryland, reported that the information gained from Japan’s biological warfare program was ‘absolutely invaluable’, ‘could never have been obtained in the USA because of scruples attached to experiments on humans’, and ‘was obtained fairly cheaply’ (Harris 2002, p. 264). At the International Military Tribunal for the Far East (the Tokyo War Crimes Tribunal), only one reference to ‘poisonous serums’ used on Chinese civilians was made. It was swiftly dismissed due to lack of evidence (Williams & Wallace 1989, p. 176). A year later, in late 1949, the Soviet Union held a separate tribunal, the Khabarovsk War Crimes Trials.

All twelve accused Japanese military personnel were found guilty of manufacturing and using biological weapons, with sentences from two to twenty-five years at a Siberian labour camp (Yudin 2010, p. 68). However, all were released back to Japan by 1956 (Tsuneishi 2010, p. 30); the longest sentence served by anyone connected to Japan's biological warfare research was seven years. Neither Shiro Ishii, nor the second commander of Unit 731, Masaji Kitano, nor Ishii's deputy at the Epidemic Prevention Research Laboratory, Ryoichi Naito, were ever tried.

In the decades following the war, former bacteriological warfare scientists became presidents of universities, deans of medical schools and representatives of government agencies, many receiving public honours. '[O]nce freed of the danger of war crimes trials, alumni of the biological warfare units were able to assume leading roles in the postwar Japanese medical and scientific communities' (Harris 2002, p. 494). Ryoichi Naito went on to found the Green Cross Company in 1951, taking advantage of the American demand for blood products during the Korean War (Harris 2002, p. 494). The company became one of Japan's leading pharmaceutical companies and was a trusted symbol of health—until it was rocked by scandal in 1998 when it was found guilty of selling HIV-infected blood to haemophiliac patients, leading to at least 400 deaths (Harris 2002, p. 494). The company has since merged and changed its name.

Ishii's activities after the war are unclear. Some historians believe he went to Maryland to advise the US on bioweapons (Drayton 2005), while Ishii's daughter Harumi maintains he stayed in Japan and opened a clinic, dedicating himself to the welfare of children (Ishii 1982). In any case, while most of his colleagues advanced their careers, Ishii withdrew from public life. He died at home of throat cancer in 1959, at the age of 69. According to his daughter, he converted to Catholicism in his final years, which seemed to bring him relief (Williams & Wallace 1989, p. 298).

In Minami's office in Shinjuku, the room was quiet. It was past six o'clock in the middle of Golden Week holidays, and nearly all the other workers had gone home. Darkness was

gathering outside. Almost two hours into our discussion, Minami was still carefully choosing his words, the same sincere expression on his face. If not for people such as Minami, agitating for change, the matter of the bones would have fallen into obscurity in Japan long ago.

In the case of Germany, it was more of a top-down decision. The government made a decision to compensate, and this was handed down to the people. But in Japan, this approach is difficult to achieve. You have to change the society—change the people—first, and then there will be a bottom-up movement that will eventually change the attitude of the government. But this will take time.

(Minami 2013)



The National Institute of Infectious Diseases sits atop a hill adjacent to Toyama Park. The bricks of the low-rise building are a pale cobalt blue—perhaps the architect’s attempt to give the building some cheer. Torii, Nasu and I entered through the sliding glass doors and provided our details for the visitor register. After a few minutes, a guard appeared and started escorting us towards the monument for the bones. Torii paused in front of an alcove at the corner of the building that framed a network of pipes.

‘This is where the bones were found in 1989. In the basement, to be exact. That spot is currently used as the library, meaning the people researching in the library are doing that together with the bones.’ He spoke with a slight smile.

I lifted my camera, but the guard extended a gloved hand and apologised, saying photographs of the building were not allowed.

‘Really? No longer? They’ve become stricter,’ Torii said.

As we continued down the path, anticipation built inside me. The monument to the unidentified bones was the highlight of the walk. Not only is it a memorial to the unidentified victims, it is also a symbol of Japan’s contested memory—a permanent and a temporary resting place, depending on whose



view one takes. The members of the Human Remains association still hope to DNA test the bones and send them to their village of origin, although very little progress has been made in the past decade. Before my visit to Japan, I had seen the monument in photos online, but I wanted to see it in person to pay my respects.

I looked up. Silver clouds shredded the sky. We walked a few more steps, turned a corner, and then I saw it. Beneath the branches of a bare cherry tree, the memorial sat, all sleek black lines and sharp corners. A symbol for clean, ordered Japan—the Japan of tea ceremonies and minimalist design. Although it was a suitably grand structure, the block of granite seemed to speak of the anonymity of the bones and of the cruelty of the regime that carried out the killings. As Torii, Nasu, the guard and I stood alongside it, our figures were reflected on the polished surface. A plaque affixed to one side read:

On this site stood the former Army Medical College until 1945. In July 1989, when Toyama Research Office was due to be constructed, human remains thought to be specimens belonging to the Army Medical School were excavated. This plaque is to offer our deepest condolences to the deceased.

Ministry of Health and Labour, March 2002.

At the rear of the monument, cement steps descend to a metal door. Inside, the bones are stored in fourteen wooden boxes stacked on metal alloy shelves. I imagined them jumbled together, like the clutter of offices in Japan, so often hidden from public view. For years, the bones were stored in cardboard boxes at the funeral parlour, until one of the victims' relatives visited Japan and demanded to know of the mayor whether any progress had been made regarding them. 'The answer she received was that the bones were moved from cardboard boxes into wooden boxes,' Torii said (Torii & Nasu 2013).

Where we stood at the top of the hill, the wind was strangely absent. It was quiet, almost preternaturally so. Someone was playing tennis nearby. I heard the *pop* of a ball propelled back and forth, a metronome to our solemnity. It brought to mind every case brought to court, the rejections and appeals, the constant back and forth. A game of perseverance, drawn out over years. In that quiet corner, it was hard to believe we were in Tokyo at all—let alone a few kilometres from central Shinjuku.

My mood was sombre as I tried to think of the people to whom the bones once belonged. But with the remains hidden inside the monolith, away from public view, I struggled to feel any true connection and grasp the extent to which they had been wronged.

Two kanji characters are inscribed on the monument's polished flank. 'Seiwa' is how they are read. It is an invented word, chosen by someone within the ministry, combining two common characters for 'quiet' and 'peace'. Although 'quiet peace' would be a fitting epitaph for most tombstones, in light of the unique situation of the remains, it seemed a particularly cruel irony. Because, almost seventy years since the end of the war and twenty-four years since the discovery of the remains, the 233 human bones are still waiting, still silent.



Memory of Trauma and Conflicted Voice in *The Remains of the Day*, *Austerlitz* and *After Darkness*

In a 2001 interview, a month before the release of the English version of *Austerlitz*, W G Sebald described growing up in Germany in the ‘conspiracy of silence’ surrounding the war—a silence that rendered him ignorant of the horrors that took place around the time of his birth in 1944. He recounted how, as a teenager, he was shown a documentary at grammar school about the liberation of the Belsen concentration camp: ‘It was a nice spring afternoon, and there was no discussion afterwards; you didn’t know what to do with it. It was a long drawn-out process to find out, which I’ve done persistently ever since’ (Jaggi 2001).

Austerlitz, Sebald’s final book before his untimely death in 2001, attempts to redress this postwar silence and also explores *how* to narrate a traumatic past—a concern shared by *The Remains of the Day* by Kazuo Ishiguro. Both novels feature a male first-person narrator whose journey through his memories (or in the case of *Austerlitz*, through his friend’s memories) reveals a conflict of conscience related to a past trauma.

The Remains of the Day (first published in 1989) is narrated by ageing English butler Stevens. In 1956, he embarks on a motoring trip to visit former housekeeper Miss Kenton, whom he has not seen in twenty years. While journeying through the countryside he reflects on past events, including the decline and death of his father; the clandestine meetings his former employer Lord Darlington held in a bid to stop

Britain going to war with Germany; and his domestic disputes with head housekeeper Miss Kenton. Despite Stevens' outward contentment, as he sifts through his memories, clues point to his regret at the lost opportunity for love with Miss Kenton, and Lord Darlington's involvement in Hitler's propaganda scheme.

Austerlitz (first published in 2001) traces an unnamed narrator's encounters with architectural historian Jacques Austerlitz. Over a series of meetings, the narrator learns of Austerlitz's unhappy childhood reared by an emotionally distant Welsh minister and his wife, who, as Austerlitz discovers upon their deaths, are in fact his foster parents. Despite the revelation, Austerlitz resists excavating his past until much later in life, when, post-retirement, he hears two women on the radio discussing their journey on the Kindertransport, the program that saw 10,000 unaccompanied Jewish minors transported to England in 1938-39. The discussion triggers an awakening in Austerlitz as he realises he, too, was on the Kindertransport, arriving in England from Prague at the age of four. So begins a process of recovering lost memories and uncovering his past.

My novel, *After Darkness*, uses a male first-person narrator to explore similar themes of loss and memory. Retired Japanese doctor Ibaraki looks back on his life when he was interned as an enemy alien in South Australia. Coming from Broome, where he'd been the respected doctor of the Japanese hospital, he had to learn to live among a disparate group of Japanese—many of whom were arrested while working in the Dutch East Indies and French New Caledonia. Others, such as the Australian-born members of The Gang, resented their treatment by the Japanese camp leaders. As the world of the camp unfolds through the doctor's retelling, details about his past emerge: his connection with the nun he trained as a nurse in Broome, and a trauma in Japan that triggered the breakdown of his marriage. At camp, Doctor Ibaraki befriends troubled half-Japanese internee Pete. When tensions between Pete and camp leaders escalate, the doctor's loyalties are divided—forcing him to face up to his involvement in biological warfare development in Japan.

Through the gaps in narration that introduce conflict in the voice, these texts probe not only *how* to narrate memory of trauma, but also *when* to, as they ask: When do we remain silent, and when do we speak?

The illusion of intimacy

First-person narration is typically the most intimate mode of narration as it telescopes the divide between narrator and reader. In the texts I am examining, intimacy is established early on by amplifying the narrator's innermost thoughts and feelings: in *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens expresses his alarm at committing a series of errors in his duties; in *Austerlitz*, the unnamed narrator's vivid description of the haunting eyes of the nocturnal animals at the zoo emphasises his meandering thoughts and preoccupations; and in *After Darkness*, Doctor Ibaraki reveals his age-related insecurity when he frets: 'It's the sort of reaction I dread these days. The subtle missteps one makes.'

But as the narratives unfold, the intimacy proves to be false, as the narrators' true selves remain obscured. Despite Doctor Ibaraki's disclosure of the events before and during the war that shaped his life, and despite the narrator of *Austerlitz*'s rich description of his surroundings and his encounters with Austerlitz, readers learn very little of either character's feelings. In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' voice is tinged with regret as he dwells on certain past events, such as his father's sudden deterioration, his fraught working relationship with Miss Kenton and his employer's fall from grace. Yet Stevens does almost everything *but* acknowledge his regret (over his lack of intimacy with his father, his missed opportunity for love with Miss Kenton and Lord Darlington's involvement in Hitler's propaganda scheme), as he denies, defends and dodges.

Thus, the use of first-person narration in these contexts turns out to be antithetical, as it opens up narrative distance at the same time as maintaining an illusion of intimacy. This deliberate distancing of the narrator is key to reading these texts: readers draw meaning from the gaps in narration and

the chasm between what the narrators say and what they do. As Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan points out: ‘Holes and gaps are so central in narrative fiction because the materials the text provides for the reconstruction of a world (or a story) are insufficient for saturation’ (1983, p. 127). The gaps in the narratives are the earliest indicators that all is not as it seems.

In *Austerlitz*, an uncanny absence pervades the text—an absence that is rarely overtly referred to but nonetheless exists on every page. The most arresting absence is the identity of the narrator—readers never learn his name, his profession or (for the most part) his feelings. In contrast to Austerlitz’s detailed descriptions of architecture and his private memories of his childhood, the narrator’s lack of emotional reflection is unusual, almost jarring. In all respects except the voice the narrator is strangely absent. The narrator’s voice, however, is beguiling: both distant and hauntingly intimate, as he describes, for example, the ‘difficult period which dulled my sense of other people’s existence’ and the curious affliction that affects his vision (Sebald 2011, p. 34–36).

Absence abounds at the level of sentences, too. Their hypnotic rhythm, their flow and length—as well as their detailed content, like a river rich with silt—masks a silence below the surface: namely, the silence surrounding Austerlitz’s identity, and the wider silence of the post-World War II era, in which there is scant discourse about the repercussions of war. In a 1998 interview, Sebald explained:

I was born in 1944 in an idyllic place, untouched by the War, but, in looking back upon this year, I cannot abstract from the fact that I know what happened during this last year of the war particularly—the bombing of my native country, the deporting of people from Rhodes or Sicily, or God knows where, to the most ghastly places anybody could possibly imagine. The pervasiveness of that and the fact that it wasn’t just something that happened in one or two places but that it happened almost throughout Europe, and the calamitous dimensions of it, are something that, even though I left Germany when I was twenty-one, I still have in my backpack and I just can’t put it down. And it seems to me that the swirling movement of history

moved toward that point and that somehow we have to acknowledge this. (Sebald, Turner & Zeeman 2006, p. 27–28)

Through the absences that pervade the narrative of *Austerlitz* and the quest for identity it triggers, Sebald attempts to redress this post-Holocaust silence.

In *After Darkness*, what the doctor is telling is in many ways less significant than what he is *not* telling. He is often questioned about his wife and, although the questions cause him obvious discomfort, he refuses to elaborate or internally reflect. But his silence speaks volumes, functioning as a kind of narrative black hole: through its very lack, it draws meaning to it. Each time the doctor avoids an uncomfortable question or skirts around the issue of his wife, the black hole grows in size and strength, until finally it drags all matter to its core and transforms meaning.

Narrative uncertainty

The gaps in narration and the absences that haunt the texts sow the seeds for a growing narrative uncertainty, as readers become aware of the narrators' fallibility and lack of self-awareness—whether by conscious design or not.

Stevens' unreliable narration is revealed as his judgement and interpretation of situations are at odds with those around him. At many points, Stevens says one thing but behaves differently. He repeatedly praises Lord Darlington, saying, 'he was a truly good man at heart... and one I am today proud to have given my best years of service to' (Ishiguro 2005, p. 64), but twice when he is asked in hushed tones by people he has just met what it was like to work for Lord Darlington, Stevens denies ever having worked for him, indicating the shame he actually feels. Likewise, when Stevens recalls how his father suffered a stroke during an important conference at Darlington Hall, Stevens makes no mention of his grief, instead drawing attention to the triumph he felt having coped under 'the pressures contingent on me that night' (p. 114). We're only aware of his grief as Lord Darlington asks whether

he is feeling all right. ‘You look as though you’re crying,’ Lord Darlington says. Stevens responds by laughing it off as the ‘strains of a hard day’ (p. 110). When he talks about the daily meetings he starts having with Miss Kenton over a cup of cocoa, he stresses their ‘professional’ purpose: ‘Our reason for instituting such meetings was simple: we had found that our respective lives were often so busy, several days could go by without our having an opportunity to exchange even the most basic of information... I must reiterate, these meetings were predominantly professional in character’ (p. 155–156). But it is the start of a growing affection between Stevens and Miss Kenton—an affection that Miss Kenton eventually makes clear, but to which Stevens never responds. The irony—so artfully realised in *The Remains of the Day*—is that readers are more aware of Stevens’ feelings than Stevens is himself. Stevens’ unreliable narration provides a kind of textual *jouissance*, as readers find pleasure in identifying the true source of his psychological torment.

Narrative uncertainty in *Austerlitz* springs from the intersections and interstices of the narrative layers within the text. Although there is only one narrator, most of what he narrates is the stories Austerlitz told him, and many of Austerlitz’s stories were told to him by others—creating stories within stories. Further emphasising this uncertainty is the fact very little distinguishes the voice of the narrator from the voice of Austerlitz, blurring the boundaries between who is speaking and casting further doubt on the narrator’s identity, and in turn calling into question his reliability. Austerlitz says, ‘Since my childhood and youth... I have never known who I really was’ (p. 44). These words could also be those of the narrator, whose ambiguous presence at the edges of the narrative begs explanation. Austerlitz himself acknowledges his own uncertainty when he says, ‘...everything becomes confused in my head: my experiences of that time, what I have read, memories surfacing and then sinking out of sight again’ (p. 226).

In *After Darkness*, uncertainty permeates the text through the doctor’s questionable narration. In the opening scene, Doctor Ibaraki states, ‘I’ve never been one to dwell on the past,’ then promptly launches into a sustained excursion into

his memories of forty-plus years earlier. Like Stevens in *The Remains of the Day*, Doctor Ibaraki is afflicted by a specific blindness that means he fails to see obvious signs of his shaky moral foundation. While in the internment camp, half-Japanese internee Pete tells the doctor that Yamada attacked him while he was sitting in the mess hall. But the doctor responds: ‘Yamada Denkichi is a very good friend. He would never do something like that. You must be mistaken.’ Although there are early clues in the narrative about Yamada’s sinister nature (such as his remarks about Johnny during the fight in the mess hall), the doctor fails to notice such clues until he overhears a conversation between Yamada and Mayor Mori discussing Pete. Scenes were ordered within the novel to increase narrative uncertainty: the events at the internment camp initially appear to be the cause of the doctor’s nostalgic unease in 1989, but when the narrative vaults back further in time to his involvement in biological warfare development in Japan, the true source of his traumatic memory is unveiled.

Voices in conflict

I have hitherto established that the voices of the narrators both reveal and hide, are intimate and distancing and present and absent at the same time. They are unreliable because of the narrators’ contradictory actions, their lack of knowledge, their narrow world view or their indeterminate identity. But why?

I posit that voice itself is a site of conflict in these texts, as the narrators grapple with self-identity, memories and emotions that are in constant flux. The gaps in knowledge and slips in the narration conspire to create a voice at odds with itself. This struggle arises from the narrators’ numerous dichotomies—their aloofness and gregariousness, their contrasting public and private selves, their yearning for selfhood and their rejection of it—but are chiefly a result of the narrators’ moral and ethical dilemmas, as I explore further in the penultimate section. First, I will illustrate how symbolism and the texture of the language (diction and syntax) embody the heterogeneous and often conflicting qualities of the narrative voice.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens' verbosity, formal diction and complicated syntax create a persona that both engages and frustrates readers. The novel begins: 'It seems increasingly likely that I really will undertake the expedition that has been preoccupying my imagination now for some days' (p. 3). He then launches into a lengthy discussion of 'bantering', a skill he is not good at but wants to improve so he can better serve his current employer. Like the many mists and fogs that roll across the landscape, Stevens' language also obscures his true feelings. He switches from using 'I' to 'one' whenever he recalls an emotional event. When recalling his disagreement with Miss Kenton over his father's failing health and abilities, Stevens muses: 'When one thinks about it, when one remembers the way Miss Kenton had repeatedly spoken to me of my father...' (p. 69) His language is also defensive as he often uses phrases such as, 'let me make perfectly clear' and 'I should point out', particularly when referring to past events that call Lord Darlington's reputation into question, and by implication Stevens'. Instead of clarifying matters, Stevens' continual protestations make readers question his version of events by flagging Stevens' 'self-censoring, self-deceptive psychological orientation' (Shaffer 1998, p. 164). He often inserts brief rhetorical questions into his narration, such as: '—and why should I hide it?' (p. 5); 'Indeed, why should I deny it?' (p. 115), that betray his insecurities.

Snow is a recurring motif in *Austerlitz* that symbolises the silence that follows trauma. From the waiting room of his ophthalmologist's clinic, the narrator gazes out at the wintry London landscape and thinks of 'winter in the mountains, the complete absence of sound, and my childhood wish for everything to be snowed over' (p. 37). Similarly, Austerlitz recalls his foster mother's final days when '[t]he cold had grown stronger than ever outside, and it had become more and more silent' (p. 64). Snow's symbol as a blanket of silence within the text is clear. In an interview, Sebald even described the village he grew up in 'in a valley covered in snow for five months a year' as 'a silent place' (Jaggi 2001), which harks back to the silence that followed the Belsen documentary he saw as a teenager, spurring his quest to figure out 'what to do

with it'. When reading *Austerlitz*, one has the sense that if only the snow melted and the landscape was bare we would be able to see the whole truth. Paradoxically, however, no matter how much detail is used to describe the events and shapes of Austerlitz's past, 'the truth lies elsewhere, away from it all, somewhere as yet undiscovered' (p. 72).

Labyrinths and fortresses dominate the narrative of *Austerlitz* in content, symbolism and form. Prompted by his initial meeting with Austerlitz, the narrator visits the Breendock fort in Antwerp, where he notes 'its projections and indentations kept shifting, so far exceeding my comprehension' (p. 20). The imposing structures reflect the psychological confusion of both Austerlitz and the narrator, their search for answers and also their intellectual incarceration. Austerlitz says: 'Memories like this came back to me in the disused Ladies' Waiting Room of Liverpool Street Station, memories behind and within which many things much further back in the past seemed to lie, all interlocking like the labyrinthine walls I saw in the dusty grey light, and which seemed to go on and on for ever' (p. 136). Indeed, the entire book is a labyrinth, disorientating readers by blurring the divide between the narrator and Austerlitz, and enticing readers along paths that lead to dead ends. Even the sentences, many of which stretch across half a page, confound with their lyricism and supple flow of words. As soon as one reads them, their meaning slips away, echoing the uncertain nature of traumatic memory.

Doctor Ibaraki's narration is predominantly restrained and unembellished, and he uses imagery sparingly. But every so often unsettling images spurt through his psychological barrier, like lava through fissures in volcanic rock. On the train to the internment camp, he notices dead trees, 'their limbs stretching skywards, as if begging for forgiveness'. Upon hearing news of Pete's suicide attempt, he states: 'Images floated up from somewhere deep. A blood stain on wet clothes.' These slips in the otherwise unblemished veneer of the doctor's narration reveal the fractures in his selfhood and the trauma that haunts his subconscious.

As the camp narrative progresses and the doctor's belief system slowly crumbles, the imagery he uses indicates a

growing awareness of his flawed perception. When he sees Pete through the fluttering sheets recovering in the hospital bed, he's struck by a kaleidoscopic vision of 'a sheet that covered a leg, the next an arm and then a fleeting glimpse of a chin in a jumble of fragments'. When the sheets settle, the fragmentary imagery persists: 'A rectangle of light from a window fell diagonally across him, illuminating part of his torso and jaw, as if he were a statue hewn from two different stones.' Doctor Ibaraki is also often 'momentarily blind[ed]' by light, echoing his failure to see what's going on around him in relation to the camp bullying and Sister Bernice's affections.

Listening to the unspeakable

Trauma haunts the narrative of all three texts. But how, in a first-person narrative, does one represent trauma that the narrator has not fully acknowledged, the moral implications of which he has not fully faced yet? Trauma, that deceptive beast, is perhaps best approached side-on: through gaps in narration, non-chronological structure and stories told by others.

All three texts bear a chronological complexity as the narratives shift back and forth in time using analepses that echo the seemingly random process of memory. This roundabout way of approaching narrative, with events looping back in on themselves, is an effective way to approach memory of trauma: feeling our way around the edges first before arriving at the centre, or root cause.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens returns to certain past events and ideas again and again, such as the dismissal of the Jewish maids and his concept of dignity, and with each retelling another layer of meaning is added until he finally sees it anew. The novel's climax occurs when Stevens has an epiphany on the pier and acknowledges the fallacy of his life—putting professionalism before personal beliefs and desires. In her analysis of narrative technique in *The Remains of the Day*, Kathleen Wall points out, '...while we tell in order to know, the process in some ways conspires against our knowing... Like Stevens, we must circle back again and again until we

catch ourselves with our defences down and thus recognise the full implications of what we have probably known all along' (Wall 1994, p. 38-39). Thus Stevens' narration—defensive and unreliable as it may be—brings him closer to the traumatic truth of his past.

The horrors of the Holocaust pervade *Austerlitz* but are only ever alluded to obliquely. The meandering narrative provides glimpses of the Holocaust's traumatic impact through detailed descriptions of fortresses, railway stations and concentration camps. However, wartime atrocities are never directly addressed—not even in the detailed description of Theresienstadt concentration camp, where Austerlitz's mother was sent. Even the story of Austerlitz's mother is approached at an angle, recounted third-hand from Vera, who told Austerlitz, who tells the narrator. Despite Austerlitz's attempts to discover the exact fate of his parents, answers elude him. In the essay 'Air War and Literature' in *On the Natural History of Destruction* (2003), Sebald examines the failure of postwar German literature to depict 'the destruction of German cities as millions experienced it'. Referring to his own writing, he states, 'I am well aware that my unsystematic notes do not do justice to the complexity of the subject, but I think that even in their incomplete form they cast some light on the way in which memory (individual, collective and cultural) deals with experiences exceeding what is tolerable' (Sebald 2003, p. 78–79). *Austerlitz* as a whole grapples with how to put into words 'experiences exceeding what is tolerable'. The narrator approaches it obliquely, through someone else's words and through what is left unsaid, because the nature of trauma is such that it can only be approached by listening to what is unspeakable.

Similarly, in *After Darkness*, readers first become aware of Doctor Ibaraki's moral canker as he dodges questions and avoids overt reflection on his past. But it is the complex structure of the novel, shifting between three locations and four time periods with scant regard for chronological order, that reveals the true extent of the doctor's burden of memory. Mimicking the elusive nature of repressed memories, scenes shift between the internment camp, Broome and Japan, until readers finally learn the reason for the breakdown of the

doctor's marriage and his unnatural reticence—his horrific involvement in biological warfare experimentation that he cannot face head-on. Delaying the reveal of information in this way, circling ever closer to the traumatic heart of the matter, builds tension and emphasises the weight of the narrator's emotional burden.

The weight of history

All three novels investigate the disjuncture between individual and collective memory, as the narrators' interpretation of past events is constantly challenged by prevailing beliefs and attitudes. The narrators are caught within a moral and ethical bind that forms the wellspring of conflict within the narratives, affecting the narrators' inner thoughts, moral outlook and relationships with other characters.

Austerlitz is initially blind to the mystery of his past, yet strangely drawn to the stories preserved in the architecture around him. Decades later, after hearing the radio program about the Kindertransport, he visits Prague and meets his former neighbour Vera, who describes his mother's deportation to Theresienstadt concentration camp. Austerlitz visits the concentration camp and embarks on a train trip to retrace the route he'd travelled as a four-year-old. Through this, he 'acquired some idea of the history of the persecution which my avoidance system had kept from me for so long, and which now, in this place, surrounded me on all sides' (p. 198). Austerlitz's journey of self-discovery echoes the narrator's moral compulsion to acknowledge the 'swirling movement of history' (to use Sebald's phrase) that led to the Holocaust and that still surrounds us. Through Austerlitz's stories, the narrator gains a greater awareness of 'the history of persecution' and his own place in the world. At the end of the narrative, Austerlitz stays in France to try to discover more about his father and gives the narrator the keys to his house in London, in effect passing the baton. The never-ending search for answers continues as the narrator begins his own solitary wanderings through the city, following in Austerlitz's footsteps.

In *The Remains of the Day*, Stevens has built his life around a definition of dignity that elevates professionalism above emotions and personal beliefs. Loyal to a fault, Stevens never challenged Lord Darlington's support of the Nazi regime and even went as far as dismissing two maids at Darlington's request for the mere fact they were Jewish. His steadfast commitment to dignity also thwarts his chance at love with Miss Kenton. It is not until late in the narrative, when he stays the night in Moscombe and meets the local villagers, that his mistaken belief becomes clear. When Stevens suggests 'dignity' is the quality that distinguishes 'true gentlemen from a false one that's just dressed in finery', political enthusiast Harry Smith disagrees, saying dignity is 'something every man and woman in this country can strive for and get'. Harry continues:

That's what we fought Hitler for, after all. If Hitler had had things his way, we'd just be slaves now... It's one of the privileges of being born English that no matter who you are, no matter if you're rich or poor, you're born free and you're born so that you can express your opinion freely, and vote in your member of parliament or vote him out. That's what dignity's really about, if you'll excuse me, sir. (p. 196)

Stevens' mood is dramatically different after that conversation, culminating in the final scene when he breaks down while watching the sunset from Weymouth pier. He says:

Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man, He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes... I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really—one has to ask oneself—what dignity is there in that? (p. 255–256)

Stevens' about-face as he finally acknowledges his regret over his past actions indicates his destroyed moral foundation in light of his new understanding.

Like Stevens, Doctor Ibaraki is obsessed by a concept. The importance of discretion was impressed upon him in the early days of his career, and he committed to upholding it for the rest of his life. For Ibaraki, discretion is inextricably linked

to personal honour. So he maintains his silence regarding his involvement in biological warfare development in Japan, even when it leads to the breakdown of his marriage. At camp, Ibaraki clings to the importance of discretion; it is not until he is convinced of Yamada's brutality against Pete that he is spurred to act. Only at the end of the narrative, forty-seven years later, does Ibaraki realise the wider implications of his years of silence. His journey through his memories casts new light on past events and on a letter he received from Sister Bernice years ago, urging him to share his burden: 'Finally, Sister Bernice's words open up to me. I'd clung to the ideal of discretion, when it was courage—and forgiveness—I'd needed all along.'

These narratives remind us the traumas of history are not confined to a distant, unknowable past—they are woven into our social fabric. As much as the narrators (and Austerlitz) try to keep the weight of history at bay, their role in past events returns to haunt them. It is no coincidence the emotional climaxes occur at the point the narrators recognise their personal involvement in the 'swirling movement of history': when Stevens realises his wasted life serving the 'misguided' Lord Darlington, when Austerlitz hears the radio program and remembers he was on the Kindertransport, too, and when the discovery of buried human bones prompts Doctor Ibaraki to recall his past and in turn speak out. They all have a traumatic awakening, as history—or, more specifically, the acknowledgement of the part they played in history—finally overwhelms them.

Conclusion

The Remains of the Day, *Austerlitz* and *After Darkness* provide three models for exploring how we understand and narrate a traumatic past. By approaching memories obliquely, by simultaneously hiding and revealing and drawing attention to what is unsaid and by using complex, non-linear structure to describe, the narrators both tell and find meaning through their narration.

Narration is a *transformative* process in these texts, as the

narrators seek to understand their past through their telling. As Wall writes: ‘Narration can be both an attempt to tell and an effort to understand one’s story’ (1994, p. 38). At times a study in self-deception and an act of confession, narration also offers a way to repair a fractured selfhood, as Stevens, the unnamed narrator of *Austerlitz* and Doctor Ibaraki come to terms with the part they played in the traumas of the past. Despite the lapse in time between the events and their narration, the narrators are still mentally processing their pasts—thus their tendency to obscure, avoid and distort occurs on a subconscious level as they struggle to describe the unimaginable and come face-to-face with their earlier failings.

The revelation of their role in past events prompts diverse responses from the three narrators, in turn addressing the question of *if* or *when* to speak out. Stevens’ epiphany about his wasted life is closely followed by his renewed commitment to bantering—signalling his disavowal of transformation as he retreats to the silences of his past. In contrast, Doctor Ibaraki’s insight after a lifetime of denial is accompanied by a commitment to change as he finally decides to share his secret. *Austerlitz* provides an alternative: the narrator’s wanderings and his continued search for answers are a rally against complacency that stress the need to constantly probe the silences of our collective past. If there are any conclusions to be drawn from these texts, it is that there is no template to approach memory of trauma. The varied narrative approaches highlight the individual and complex nature of postwar memory.

Given the difficulties of representing, in a first-person narrative, trauma that the narrator has not fully acknowledged, the moral implications of which he has not fully faced, could these novels have been written using third-person point of view to the same effect? Doing so would surely jeopardise the push-pull force of the narrators’ internal struggle that is manifest in their voices—and the conflict inherent in the narrative is at the heart of all three texts.

The Other Side of Silence

I sit at my desk, my senses attuned to the sounds of the city below. A horn cuts across the hum of traffic. A bus thunders along the road. Somewhere, jazz music plays, alternately clear and faint as if carried to me on a breeze. A man shouts—a staccato cry like a glint of light. I put on my noise-cancelling headphones, and am enveloped in a static hiss. The sounds of the city are reduced to a distant rumble. They are subdued, indistinct—as if contained within a sphere of glass. Finally, in this sequestered state, I begin to write.

During the years spent writing this thesis, I developed a keen appreciation for silence, which soon became an obsession. Under self-imposed pressure to produce pages of perfect prose, ordinary sounds that never bothered me before became amplified to the point of torment. At my office, I chafed at colleagues' telephone conversations and exchanges in the kitchen, stiffened when cutlery clanged in the sink. Even the sound of someone eating lunch at the cubicle next to mine sent shivers up my spine. I trawled the internet, searching for stories of writers who worked in near silence, wearing earplugs, earmuffs or headphones while they worked—or, in the case of Jonathan Franzen, all three (Eakin 2001). I began to wear earplugs at my desk every day, later graduating to noise-cancelling headphones. Sometimes, desperate to focus, I wore both. I became one of those neurotic writers at whom I used to scoff, incapacitated without my noise-negating accoutrements. Silence—complete silence—though, was unattainable. Human

life surrounded me in the murmurs of my colleagues and the thrum of traffic, reassuringly removed yet always *there*.

From this near silence, one day a voice emerged. I'd had one false start on my novel (a story narrated in omniscient third-person about ill-fated love between a young pearl diver and the daughter of a master pearler in Broome) that my supervisor wisely suggested I put aside, and was struggling with the opening of a new story that focused on Japanese internees. I had spent days attempting it in the first person, when the voice of the doctor finally arrived in my imagination, like a gift from above. In an instant, I had a strong sense of his character: wise and erudite, yet suffused with regret. It was the voice of a man who had lived most of his life resigned to his unhappiness. Through its beguiling rhythm and restraint, I sensed it was a voice that concealed. Here was a man who harboured a secret from his past—a secret so dark that even decades later he found it difficult to face. Seemingly in minutes, I knew this man as well as I knew an old friend, but what I didn't know was *why*—why he was so full of regret. What happened in his past to make him feel that way? From there, I began a process to excavate the secrets of his past.

Difficulties and dilemmas

The doctor's character, so clear to me from the outset through his voice, presented me with a number of problems. Firstly, he was reticent, not given to talking about his feelings, or talking at all. Secondly, he was passive—a man of thought, not action. His reluctance to act forms the central conflict of the novel. Thirdly, during the years I spent writing the first draft, I was convinced the doctor was an unreliable narrator in the vein of English butler Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* (I read Kazuo Ishiguro's 1989 novel in the early stages of my first draft, after several people commented on the similarities of the voice). Doctor Ibaraki, I believed, was in denial about his past. He withheld information due to his lack of self-awareness and refusal to consider things in a different light.

As he was the first-person narrator of my novel, these three qualities threatened to mire the story before it had a chance to flow. Although the doctor described the action around him, the setting and weather in some detail, he offered minimal insight into his thoughts, feelings and reflections. This created an unnatural emptiness—a silence that haunted the text—that I hoped readers would identify as the doctor’s unreliability and would serve to further intrigue. I was advised to make Doctor Ibaraki less reticent and passive, but I felt that doing so would undermine his essential nature—or at least what I instinctively felt was his nature. I eventually found ways to minimise the effect of the doctor’s reticence and passivity. I created a braided narrative structure, incorporating scenes set at camp, Broome and Japan.

It was not until I received feedback on my first draft that I realised my error in believing the doctor was an unreliable narrator. He was not deluded, forgetful or deliberately deceiving: he was acutely aware of his past wrongdoings, but was unwilling to confront his traumatic memories due to the pain he knew they would unleash. This realisation freed up my approach to shaping the doctor’s voice. I allowed more room for interiority and reflection, creating a fuller character whose humanity shone through.

While the doctor had appeared in my imagination almost fully formed, it was not so with the other characters, who required extensive fleshing out and reshaping. The characters of Sister Bernice, Kayoko, Yamada and Johnny Chang all changed during the course of writing the novel. The doctor’s passivity meant he needed a foil, so in my second draft I focused on making Sister Bernice less naive and more open about her feelings. When she visits the doctor at home and admits her affection for him, she broaches a topic that Doctor Ibaraki never would have raised, elevating their relationship to another level. Likewise, Kayoko, who was an obedient wallflower in early versions, became more forthright and passionate in revisions, to contrast with the doctor’s wilful stasis. Yamada, who was previously a one-dimensional friend of the doctor at camp, became complex and untrustworthy. I also added scenes in Broome that included Johnny Chang,

so that readers would empathise with the transformative experience of his later internment.

In Japan, like in many cultures, silence is seen as a virtue. '[S]ocial decorum provides that reticence, not eloquence, is rewarded. Similarly, in art it is not articulation but the subtle art of silence that is valued' (Miyoshi 1996, p. xv). Silence, in Japan, is noble: there is beauty in restraint, reflected in everything from the simplicity of *haiku* to the stillness of a raked gravel garden. But as I saw the world of the camp



unfold through the doctor's eyes, I began thinking about the sinister side of silence. What if the characteristic the doctor prided himself on and that was so esteemed in his culture, was also the same quality that destroyed his relationships and moral foundation? This was the question that captivated me as I began to piece together a picture of the doctor's ambiguous past.

Juxtaposing the doctor's behaviour at camp with his past actions in Japan was key to developing his moral complexity. By incorporating flashbacks of increasing length and frequency of the doctor's time at the laboratory in Tokyo,

I demonstrate he is not only a victim of wartime prejudices that led to his internment in Australia, but also a perpetrator of Japanese war crimes. This was another way to counteract his inherent passivity and reticence: the flashbacks in Japan reveal more about the doctor's character than his narration at camp, by highlighting his pre-laboratory to post-laboratory transformation, while also opening up layers of complexity.

Moral and ethical considerations

Anna Funder, author of two books that explore the fragility of life under a totalitarian regime in Germany, believes in the power of ordinary people to combat institutional brutality. 'I do think it is the courage and decency of ordinary people that is a bulwark against really bad government,' she has said (Kennan 2011). This belief inspired her novel, *All That I Am* (2011), about a group of exiled anti-Hitler activists. 'It is this kind of courage that fascinated me, along with the moral compass that underlies it.'

Doctor Ibaraki's actions in *After Darkness* probe the flip side of this belief: the way that ordinary people perpetuate systemic evil. Like Funder, I was fascinated by my character's moral compass—how an essentially good person such as Doctor Ibaraki had the capacity to facilitate acts of evil at odds with his personal conscience. I was also interested in how the moral weight of past wrongdoings expanded over time, affecting his memories and behaviour decades later.

The Japanese emphasis on group, rather than individual, behaviour has been well documented since World War II. 'A group's sense of unity, which is stressed and exacted on the basis of every member's emotional and total participation, forms of itself a closed world and leads to a high degree of isolation' (Nakane 1972, p. 20-21). The importance of group cooperation in Japanese society in part explains why some former members of Unit 731 committed crimes against humanity: the pressure to conform was intense, and the ramifications of not doing so were far-reaching. Refusal to comply affected not only the individual, but people around him, too. '[I]nsulting

looks would be cast on parents and siblings,' said Ken Yuasa (Gold 1996, p. 209). According to social anthropologist Chie Nakane, Japan's central government, which developed as a result of the vertically organised society, 'made abuses of its power possible and ingrained a fear of authority in the people'. 'The outcome was probably the development of a particular Japanese attitude, which shows a readiness to yield to power, on the one hand, but an impulsive resentment of orders from above, on the other. I do not think there are many nations like the Japanese, who are so easily overcome by governmental authority and yet attempt to oppose it in everything (though with little effect)' (Nakane 1972, p. 53).

Yet it would be false to understand this unconscionable obedience to authority as a peculiarity of the Japanese. It exists in nearly every culture. Stanley Milgram's obedience experiments conducted in the 1960s found that ordinary Americans were so obedient to authority that sixty-five per cent would press a button to administer an electric shock powerful enough to kill someone when instructed to do so by a Yale scientist (Milgram 1973). The majority of test participants delivered the highest shock, even though they groaned, fidgeted, protested, argued and even broke into nervous laughter while doing so (Meyer 1970). Milgram had intended to repeat the experiment in Germany, to test the hypothesis that Germans have a basic character flaw peculiar to them that explained their willingness to enact Nazi atrocities against Jews during World War II—an idea espoused at the time by historian William Shirer (1960). The results of the tests at Yale, however, were enough to disprove the theory. 'I hardly saw the need for taking the experiment to Germany,' Milgram said (Meyer 1970). He concluded: 'Ordinary people, simply doing their jobs, and without any particular hostility on their part, can become agents in a terrible destructive process. Moreover, even when the destructive effects of their work become patently clear, and they are asked to carry out actions incompatible with fundamental standards of morality, relatively few people have the resources needed to resist authority' (Milgram 1973).

Obedience to authority takes many forms. Remaining silent when one is a witness to atrocities is one such example. As

W G Sebald pointed out, ‘I always try to explain to my parents that there is no difference between passive resistance and passive collaboration—it is the same thing. But they cannot understand that’ (Angier 2007, p. 67). In other words, opposing an issue without doing anything to stop it has the same effect as lending one’s support. In Japan, the postwar silence surrounding Japan’s atrocities in East Asia was effected and maintained by the hierarchical, group-orientated structure of Japanese society and the central government. In the case of Unit 731, General Shiro Ishii instructed members to ‘take the secret to the grave’ (Gold 1996, p. 11). Ishii’s command, coupled with the shame perpetrators felt for their past actions, ensured that nearly all remained silent in the decades after the war. More than thirty years passed before the first witnesses found the courage to speak out, long after Ishii died in 1957. My interest in this delayed processing of traumatic memory motivated me throughout the process of writing *After Darkness*. The schism between the doctor’s sense of duty and his personal beliefs enlarged over time, so that his past wrongdoings became sharper in his consciousness and his moral burden grew.

Ethical dilemmas featured not only in the content of the narrative of *After Darkness*, but also in my approach as a researcher and historical fiction writer. When embarking on research for this project, I envisaged the doctor’s external conflict stemming from relations with the Australian guards and harsh living conditions at camp. However, I soon discovered such a depiction would be historically inaccurate, as I demonstrated in Chapter One: Japanese civilian internees were treated quite well and, in accordance with the 1929 Geneva Convention relative to the Treatment of Prisoners of War, were given shelter, clothing, the same food and blanket rations as Australian troops and could not be forced to work (Nagata 1996, p.147). I found no evidence of abuse by Australian troops (aside from isolated incidents of theft of internees’ property), and the former Tatura internees I interviewed iterated their fair treatment at the hands of army personnel. ‘Nobody was unkind. We couldn’t complain about

the treatment' (Nakashiba 2012a). Although friction between the guards and internees would provide a convenient source of conflict for the narrative of *After Darkness*, I felt it would be unethical to misrepresent the behaviour of Australian military personnel. (I did, however, make a concession for the character of Private Davies, as I believed one rogue guard scarred by battle in New Guinea would not be seen as representative of all the guards.) I searched archives and books for other historical sources of conflict experienced by Japanese internees, and soon found it in the tensions between the different cultural groups, especially between the Australian-born internees and the imperialist Japanese. This presented another ethical quandary: as both the conflict at camp and the conflict in Japan originated from abuse perpetrated by Japanese people, I worried the story could be interpreted as anti-Japanese, which was not my intention at all. But after canvassing the opinions of those who read my first draft, I felt confident the manuscript would not be misconstrued as a slur against Japanese character. It might be seen as an argument against Japan's extreme imperialism, but I am comfortable with that interpretation.

The importance of time

In this thesis I have highlighted gaps and silences in narratives about past trauma, and investigated the moral and ethical implications of silence and telling. However, such an analysis would not be complete without also considering the effects of time.

W G Sebald criticised the postwar 'conspiracy of silence', which meant that as a boy growing up in rural Germany in the late 1940s and '50s, he knew virtually nothing of the genocide and widespread destruction of a few years previous. 'I grew up with the feeling that something had been withheld from me,' he said (Franklin 2007, p. 141), and he was frustrated by his inability to find out more from the people in his hometown or from his professors at university in Switzerland. He dedicated his later life to being, in the words of one essayist, a 'voice of conscience, someone who remembers injustice, who speaks for

those who can no longer speak' (Simic 2007, p. 148). Sebald chronicled the experiences of his real-life schoolteacher, Paul Bereyter, in *The Emigrants* (1996): quarter-Jewish Bereyter was ousted from his teaching position in 1935 due to his Jewish heritage, joined and fought for the German army, then, after the war, returned to teach in the same town whose inhabitants had rejected him, never once speaking about his past persecution. Sebald revealed: 'That is to my mind the more puzzling side of this particular person's life... being silent about all those dreadful things' (Wachtel 2007, p. 46). Bereyter committed suicide later in life, inspiring Sebald to write *The Emigrants* (Angier 2007, p. 69–70). Sebald's desire to explore the unspoken traumas of the past prompted the essay *On the Natural History of Destruction* (Sebald 2003), in which he decried his country's collective amnesia over the horrors of Allied bombings of German cities, and the 'scandalous deficiency' of German writers who failed to broach the subject. Yet despite Sebald's obvious empathy for the victims of both the Holocaust and the Allied bombings, in his quest to stimulate discussion about the silences of the past, he failed to recognise the importance of time as a survival mechanism and a necessary tool to make sense of past trauma. One senses the uneasiness of Sebald's position, as he was not a survivor of direct trauma, yet demanded that survivors speak about their pasts.

Those who have lived through extreme trauma are seldom able to put into words their experience immediately afterwards. As Dominick LaCapra notes, there is an 'effect of belatedness' linked to the Holocaust (LaCapra 1998, p. 9). Concentration camp survivor and author Jorge Semprun refrained for many years from writing anything at all (Lothe et al. 2012, p. 4). German writer Dieter Forte quotes Polish writer Andrzej Szczypiorski, who explained that 'after he was released from a concentration camp he needed to "switch off his head" so that his body would survive' (cited in Franklin 2007, p. 137). Forte believes Sebald, in criticising German people's unwillingness to comment on their wartime experiences, did not take into account Forte's generation—the generation of the children in the big cities [that were heavily

bombed], who can remember, when they are able, when they can find words for it—and for that one must wait an entire lifetime’ (Franklin 2007, p. 137). The witness who waits an entire lifetime to remember traumatic events brings to mind Doctor Ibaraki’s fifty-year wait.

For many, a period of silence is an essential part of the healing process. My research with former civilian internees supports this view. Those who were traumatised by their internment, such as Mary Nakashiba, spent decades in silence before they spoke about their experience. ‘I can talk about it quite freely now. I couldn’t at one time’ (Nakashiba 2012a). However, others, such as Mary’s sister, Rhoda, and Joseph Suzuki, were so traumatised they were never ready to speak about it. This is the outcome I suspect Sebald feared the most: that survivors of trauma would suffer in silence for years (like his childhood teacher Paul Bereyter) and never end up speaking out, inadvertently abetting injustice and risking the reoccurrence of similar atrocities.

The era that historian Annette Wieviorka called ‘the era of the witness’ (Wieviorka 2006) did not begin until the early 1960s, when the trial of former Nazi lieutenant colonel Adolf Eichmann took place in Jerusalem and was televised around the world—the first televised trial of its kind. Through documents provided as evidence and witness statements, viewers learned of the details of Jewish persecution for the first time. The trial proved to be cathartic for many Holocaust survivors, who began to share their tales. Since then, Holocaust awareness has flourished, with countless books, documentaries and films exploring the experience and its impact on individual and collective memory. Holocaust studies has become an established scholarly discipline, giving rise to the literary genre of Holocaust fiction.

The atrocities Japan committed in East Asia during the Pacific War have received comparatively little attention, and any recognition has come much later. Perhaps we will see a new age of awareness in the future—an era in which Japan’s biological warfare program will be taught in schools and the infection, dissection and slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Chinese, Koreans, Filipinos and Taiwanese will

feature in mainstream books and films. However, I fear that awareness has already peaked. The publication of *Akuma No Hoshoku* ('*The Devil's Gluttony*') by Seiichi Morimura in 1981 and its sequel the following year generated sales of 1.5 million and a surge of interest in Japan's conflicted past. Court cases, street protests, an exhibition, films and a slew of academic books followed. Japan's human experimentation even inspired an episode of *The X-Files* in 1995 ('731' 1995). But as compensation claims and efforts to secure an apology from the Japanese government were refused, public interest waned. Human rights lawyer Norio Minami explains, 'Right after 1995, when former members of Unit 731 came out and testified in court, a lot of young people at that time were shocked and interest grew. I could feel the change in people's interest and attitude towards the incident. However, as the cases were rejected and the judicial procedures came to an end, we saw a decline in people's interest' (Minami 2013). Even among the volunteers who support the cause, he has seen a dwindling of interest. 'People involved are ageing as we speak, and we haven't done much to hand down to the younger generation.' The Japanese government continues to ignore Chinese victims as there is not enough pressure from voters. '[W]hen the matter is domestic, the government takes action, but when it comes to the Chinese... it is very difficult to reach a decision,' Minami says.

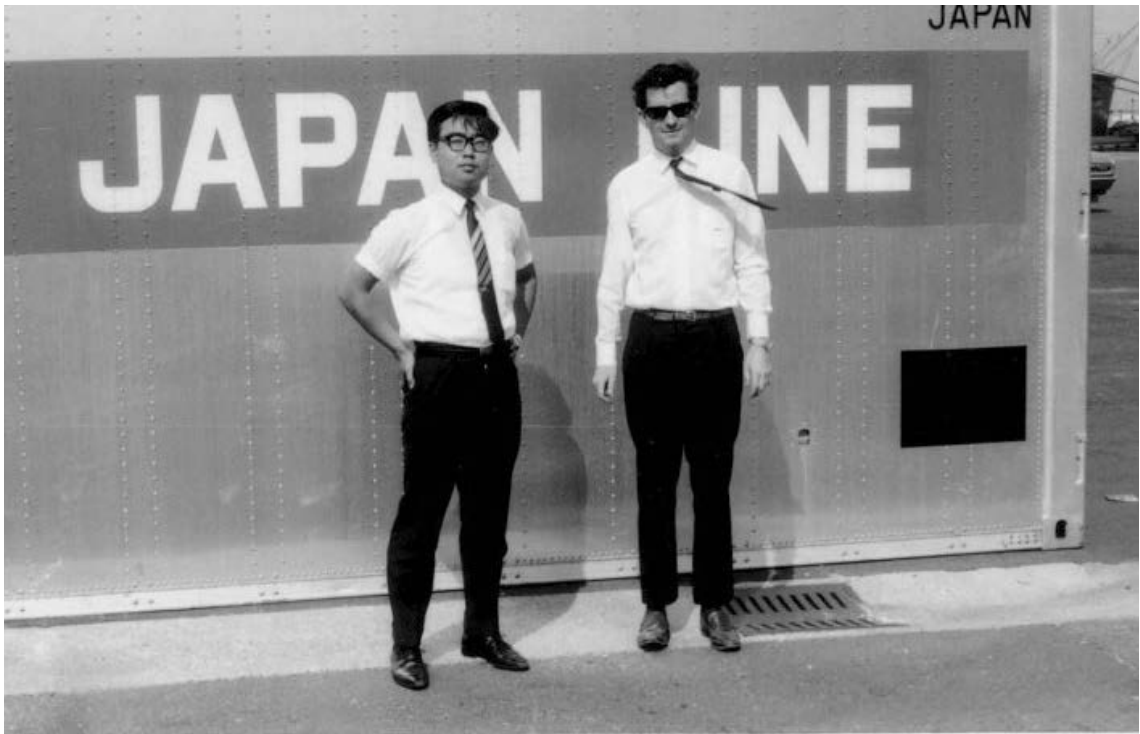
Almost seventy years have passed since Japan's biological warfare program was hastily aborted, and very few survivors or perpetrators remain. Relatives of Unit 731 victims who for years have fought for justice are growing older and passing away. With a scarcity of witnesses, a dearth of documentary evidence and collusion by the Japanese and US governments, this issue is in danger of falling into silence before it has barely been heard. I hope this thesis plays a small part in redressing that outcome.

'The past is what we carry with us'
—W G Sebald

Sebald did not believe the horror of the Holocaust could be

expressed in words, saying, ‘to write about concentration camps in my view is practically impossible’ (Silverblatt 2007, p. 79–80). Yet he felt compelled to write about the subject, so he relied on allusion, describing architecture, labyrinths and fortresses in detail in *Austerlitz*, until the reader thinks of nothing other than concentration camps. Sebald believed ‘the only way in which one can approach these things... is obliquely, tangentially, by reference rather than by direct confrontation’ (Silverblatt 2007, p. 80).

In a similar vein, I feel compelled to write about Japan. The culture and history of my mother’s country has featured in



many short stories, articles and one unfinished novel I have written. It is not *my* country, as I discovered when I lived there as a seventeen-year-old exchange student. I was an outsider in Japan—a welcome one, as the Japanese friends I made attested, but an outsider nonetheless. I have remained so with each subsequent visit, even as I accumulate friends and my language ability improves.

This thesis represents my own oblique approach to writing about my Japanese heritage—an attempt to narrate it through the fictional exploration of a collective trauma, rather than

by directly addressing my family's complex history. Narrating *After Darkness* through the eyes of a Japanese man was an effort to understand the culture from within. Yet, even as I began writing, I acknowledged the impossibility of the task. The Japan that I wished for would forever be out of my reach.

My family has never been one that shares stories. When we gather around the dinner table, we exchange brief chit-chat between mouthfuls of food. Before long, we often lapse into silence, the stillness broken only by the ticking of a clock. We are a family of few words, yet we are not repressed. Our silence is shaped by each person's history: my father, the quiet achiever who left Bathurst for Japan; my mother, the headstrong aesthete who left Japan for London, then Australia; my outgoing sister, born in Japan yet with little interest in the language or culture; and me, born in Korea and raised in Australia but inescapably drawn to Japan.

There is another, darker history that hovers around us, too distant to enter our daily lives, yet too personal to ignore. The uncle in Japan who spent eight years institutionalised with schizophrenia. I remember meeting him for the first time when I was a child: excited to meet us, he showered my sister and me with gifts. Decades later, I saw him again: he was a shell of his former self, a slate wiped clean from years of medication. There is the married yet childless aunt in Japan who once knitted me a cardigan and who has a difficult relationship with my mother. I once asked my mother why, but with her mouth set



hard, she gave me an evasive reply. There is also my mother's younger sister in Tokyo, who for decades was misdiagnosed with depression. She separated from her husband when her son was two. Her husband took custody of the child, as was the custom in Japan. She hasn't seen him since. She was almost fifty when doctors realised she had schizophrenia. My mother tells me my aunt has stopped using her microwave, for fear the noise will disturb her neighbours.

These are not exactly family secrets—they are fragments that have been let loose over time, by asking the right questions or by pure chance. These fragments form a puzzle that would take a lifetime to piece together.

My Japanese uncle died last year, after months of hospitalisation following a severe fall. I could count on one hand the number of times we had met. I think of him, alone and lost on his hospital bed in an almost empty ward. I think of the cousin in Japan whose name I do not even know. And I think of the trauma that echoes through generations, like mutations in our DNA.

Perhaps, one day, enough time will have passed for me to explore the silences of my family's past. I hope to see it with clear eyes and write about it directly, without needing to approach it from the side. But now the fractures are too deep, and all I have are stories to fill my silent and inscrutable past.

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