

A tale of forgiveness

The Railway Man reviewed by Susan Meehan

The art of war

Sean Curtin re-examines Ronald Searle's PoW sketches

In this first issue of 2014, we focus on Japan's wartime Thai-Burma Railway which has recently been in the spotlight following the release of the internationally acclaimed movie *The Railway Man*. The film is based on Eric Lomax's moving book of the same name and our review by Susan Meehan explores both versions of this emotive tale. On a positive note, this regrettable chapter in UK-Japan relations clearly demonstrates that bitter former foes can successfully be reconciled and build a strong and enduring relationship. In some respects this is one of the key messages of the film, through forgiveness and the proper acknowledging of a painful past, a strong and mutually beneficial future can be created. We look at the historical background to the movie with an analysis by Sir Hugh Cortazzi and Professor Ian Nish of Yoshihiko Futamatsu's *Across the Three Pagodas Pass: The Story of the Thai-Burma Railway*,

which was translated by Ewart Escritt. We also review Ronald Searle's immensely powerful visual record of his gruesome life as a prisoner-of-war building the so called 'Death Railway' in *To The Kwai – And Back*. Sir Hugh Cortazzi looks at a stimulating collection of scholarly essays on war-related themes entitled *Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering: Japan in the Modern World* which is edited by the eminent historian John Dower. Looking at this issue's theme from a completely different perspective Mike Sullivan reviews a fictional work that masterfully intermingles a range of issues which arose from the conflict for Japanese who were living in the USA when World War II broke out.

Sean Curtin, February 2014

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The Railway Man

Directed by Jonathan Teplitzky

Based on an adaptation of the bestselling autobiography of the same name by Eric Lomax

116 minutes, 2014

Review by Susan Meehan

The Railway Man is a powerful film based on Eric Lomax's book of the same name, featuring particularly strong performances by Colin Firth and Jeremy Irvine as, respectively, the young and older Eric Lomax. Nicole Kidman playing Patti, Lomax's second wife, exceeded my low expectations of her for this role.

Fittingly, love blossoms between devoted rail enthusiast Eric and Patti on a train. It seems orchestrated by fate as Eric has only caught that particular train by figuring out an alternative route home as a result of his scheduled journey having been delayed.

Eric and Patti end up getting married. Far from being an idyllic marriage, Patti soon becomes aware of Eric's sudden rages, mood swings, abrupt withdrawal of affection and unexpected annoyance at incorrect bills and other such trifles. She realises that Eric is periodically tormented with memories of the horrific torture he faced at the hands of his Japanese captors during World War Two.

Eric, a former signals engineer in the British army, is unable to tell Patti of the horrors he endured as a Prisoner of War of the Japanese, captured after the fall of Singapore in 1942 and forced to work on the infamous Thai-Burma Railway.

In flashbacks we see how Eric, aided by a group of fellow PoWs who scout for the necessary electrical parts, manages to build a radio. Able to hear BBC news reports, the PoWs discover that Germany and Japan are in retreat and that the UK is holding out. This gives them the courage and hope to hang on to their lives.

The Japanese captors, on finding the device, mercilessly beat one of Lomax's group. At this point Lomax carefully takes off his glasses and selflessly offers himself up for torture.

These torture scenes, offered as flashbacks, are harrowing and remind the viewer of the unimaginable torment to which the PoWs were subjected. Having read the book, I

was aware that Eric's torture went on for two years but this is not made clear in the film. While difficult to watch at times, the full horrors of the torture are more fully disclosed in the book. I found that the lingering psychological effects which the beatings had on Eric, were even more distressing than the actual physical torture itself as depicted in the film.

It is unsurprising that Eric experiences frequent meltdowns as a result of his memories. Patti feels useless as she cannot get through to Eric despite her attempts at coaxing him. She manages, however, to elicit some details about Eric's suffering and war experiences from Finlay, a fellow former POW and friend of Eric.

The story builds up to a climax as Finlay receives a newspaper article about Takashi Nagase, the interpreter who, over 30 years earlier, had been attached to the Japanese secret police and who had liaised between Eric's group of POWs and the Japanese unit officers who tortured them and forced them to work on the railway. Nagase is alive and working at a Burma Railway museum.

Encouraged by Finlay to seek revenge on their behalf, Lomax sets off to visit the museum and

Nagase, whom he has never forgotten and also held guilty for being complicit in his torture.

The denouement is certainly spectacular, and as with other parts of the film veers from the truth, primarily for dramatic effect.

The Railway Man is a sensitively made film depicting the horrors of war. Desperately sad, it ultimately delivers the message of forgiveness. It features fine performances. Jeremy Irvine is a fabulous young Lomax, having skilfully captured Colin Firth's mannerisms and way of speaking.

Firth beautifully captures Lomax's torment, much in the same way as he did when playing another complex, fragile and wounded character, George in the 2009 film, *A Single Man*. Nagase is played well by both Tanroh Ishida and Hiroyuki Sanada.

Patti is a supportive wife who is eventually successful in helping Eric deal with this past. The character is un-showy and Kidman does not steal the film in any way. On Francine Stock's *The Film Programme* (12 January 2014) on Radio 4, Frank Cottrell Boyce, the screenwriter, amusingly recounted that on seeing the film, the real Patti said that she had never been as dowdy as Kidman portrays her in the film.



There are a few touches of humour in the film, mainly when Lomax is shown enthusing about trains. Those interested in the film would also be advised to read the poignant book as Cottrell Boyce has taken liberties with Lomax's story. While the book mainly focuses on Eric's experiences as a PoW, the film is based more solidly in the present and centres on Eric's second marriage to Patti, with flashbacks to the torture scenes. The film's ending is also radically different, but understandably so in order to raise the level of tension for the cinematic audience.

Tanroh Ishida who plays the young Nagase with tremendous sensitivity is an up and coming young actor to look out for. Ishida was trained in Noh and Kyogen from the age of three. Moving to London at the age of 15, he studied at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama. You may have seen Tanroh Ishida at the 2013 Japan Matsuri in Trafalgar Square on 5 November performing as a special guest with the music band *Jetsam*.

As an insight into the horrors of World War Two, the vicissitudes of life and a testament to the redeeming power of love and forgiveness, this film really deserves to be watched!

Across the Three Pagodas Pass: The Story of the Thai-Burma Railway

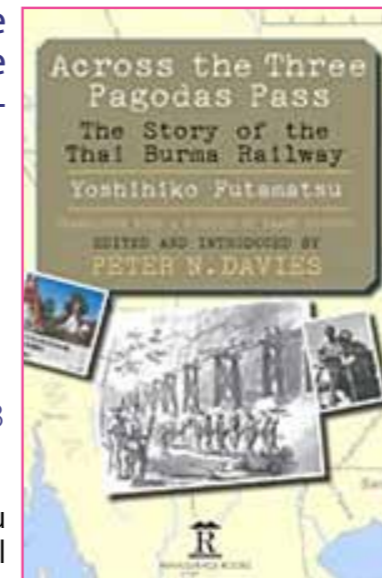
By Yoshihiko Futamatsu

Translated and introduced by Ewart Escritt

Renaissance Books, 2013

Review by Ian Nish

Yoshihiko Futamatsu was a professional engineer trained at Kyoto University. In wartime he became a gunzoku, a civilian member of an army bridging unit involved in the attack on Singapore. He says that, because of the operations of British submarines in the Andaman Sea, the Japanese did not have a secure maritime supply route to Burma for their campaign there in 1942. Instead they adopted a plan for a land route by building a railway from Thailand to Burma which had been studied in Army GHQ since 1939. Futamatsu as an engineer with the rank of captain (later major) was switched from bridging to railway construction and joined the project in June 1942. Employment of PoWs was apparently a military decision rather than one taken in Tokyo and had, the author states, been carefully thought out from the start. But the army had to revise its plans because of the unexpectedly large number of British and other allied soldiers captured in the fall of Singapore.



When the allies began a counteroffensive in north Burma at the beginning of 1943, Army GHQ ruled that the railway must be finished by the summer. This led to what Futamatsu calls 'rushed construction' (*Kyusoku kensetsu*); it was 'a reckless command' which led to imperfect standards of building. The line was opened to traffic in October 1943 when the soldiers of the 5th railway regiment working south from the Burma side with the help of local coolies joined up with the 9th railway regiment at the Three Pagodas Pass near the frontier station of Konkuita, hence the title of the book. But the operation of the line presented problems: the opening-to-traffic coincided with enemy air attacks. Japan had no fighters in the area; and her anti-aircraft guns were ineffective. In the following year the supply route was often interrupted by intensive allied bombing, especially of bridges. Thus, the engineering teams spent much time repairing the line. Futamatsu was understandably depressed at seeing the destruction of the railway so carefully planned and painstakingly constructed at such cost in human lives.

Futamatsu became a PoW in Bangkok at the end of the war and successfully claimed early release as a non-combatant gunzoku. He was repatriated to Uruga on 27 June 1946. He resumed his career with Japanese National Railways and continued with consultancies as an engineer into the 1980s.

Primarily the book provides an account of his wartime experiences, a personal story of hardship, illness and disappointment over failed attempts at repatriation. He is proud of the Thai-Burma railway as an engineering achievement in a hostile environment. But he has criticisms of the route chosen and the faulty planning: it was never going to be able to carry enough supplies for the ambitious campaign being waged by the army in Burma. He is reticent about his beliefs over the treatment of PoWs and other Asian railway builders. But he quotes at length from British authors who have written accounts of their treatment on the railway and comments sympathetically on them. He is critical of the film *Bridge on the River Kwai* along the lines that those like Louis Allen have pointed out.¹ Futamatsu had issued two pamphlets on the Thai-Burma railway around 1955 but, annoyed by the inaccuracies of the film and elsewhere, he published a comprehensive study on the subject in 1985 (in Japanese). It is this which is now translated.

It is not possible in a short review to examine his arguments in any detail. The author argues that, since Japan had not signed the Geneva convention on PoWs, the Japanese military was entitled to decline responsibility for employing PoWs. But the editor points out that Japan had signed and ratified the earlier Hague Convention (p.51). Futamatsu repeats the familiar Japanese view that soldiers must not surrender but die, when captured. At the same time he acknowledges the great contribution which the prisoners and coolies made to the railway building. This is not a book devised specially for a western readership but the translation of something addressed in the first place to a Japanese public.

Futamatsu's book is fluently translated from the Japanese by the late Ewart Escritt, himself a PoW working in Thailand. Escritt also contributes a lengthy introduction containing partly a memoir of his own experiences on the railway and partly a critique of Futamatsu's ideas (pp. xvii-lviii). Since Escritt's and Futamatsu's deaths the project has been carried forward by Professor Peter N. Davies, Emeritus Professor of the University of Liverpool. In his foreword he explains the vicissitudes of seeing this project through despite the traumas of translation and publication. He claims that it gives the reader the opportunity of evaluating the non-western viewpoint on the infamous railway and reaching a balanced judgment on a highly controversial subject (p.xxii). The book is a good read and contains much interesting new information.

Notes

¹ see *The Writings of Louis Allen: War, Conflict and Security in Japan and the Asia-Pacific, 1941-52*, Folkestone, Global Oriental, 2011, ch. 7

many rivers and passes and the suffering inflicted not only on allied PoW but also on local forced labour the line was completed in 1943 and enabled troops and supplies to reach the Japanese in Burma. But the line never came near to meeting its load targets. The original plan had envisioned loads of 3,000 tons per day, but it soon became clear that this target was far too high and the target was reduced to 1,000 tons. Largely as a result of allied bombing 'by 1944 the daily average was seldom above 300 tons (Peter Davies' Foreword page xvi).

Escritt who had been forced by his Japanese captors to work on the railway and who translated Futamatsu's book, recorded in his introduction:

'Personnel employed on the railway included about 11,000 Japanese military, 61,106 prisoners-of-war, and 182,948 Asiatic coolies. Of the prisoners of war 12,399 were recorded as having died before leaving Thailand and Burma, and it has been estimated that over 90,000 Asiatic coolies died on this work.'

Many of the PoW who survived their experiences on the railway were destined to die when prison ships taking them on to more forced labour in Japan were torpedoed by allied submarines. Some elements in the Japanese army planned to massacre prisoners remaining in Thailand if Japan was defeated, but the PoW were spared by the speed with which the war ended in August 1945 following the atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki as there were plans for them to be massacred.

Futamatsu in his account quotes at length from books by G.P. Adams and J.B. Bradley who wrote about their experiences as PoW forced to work on the line and recognizes that all who worked on the railway had a very tough time. He describes the hellish conditions caused by the climate including heat and rainfall, debilitating and fatal diseases including malaria, dysentery and cholera as well as by insanitary camps and inadequate food and medical supplies. The Japanese also lacked modern machinery and transport equipment which might have eased working conditions and speeded up the process. He also recognized that the orders to speed up completion added significantly pressures on all involved.

Futamatsu defends Japanese treatment of PoW on the grounds that Japan had not signed and ratified the relevant Geneva Convention. He also argues that in the Japanese army corporal punishment for even the most minor infringements was the accepted norm and that in this respect PoW were not treated differently from Japanese. Allied personnel had surrendered in a way that Japanese never would have done and that this at least in his view was a further justification for Japanese behaviour to their captives. This argument for inhumane treatment is unacceptable. There was not even these specious arguments for the Japanese exploitation of local slave labour.

Futamatsu (page 58) records coolly:

'Supervision by the engineers was based in getting

maximum efficiency in what in fact was an emergency, so when the day's work stint was extended each day's norm was only achieved by coercion. Usually the prisoners did not have the services of an interpreter, their g-slow tactics often went too far and incurred severe scolding and harassment. Of course, the Japanese soldiers' natural instinct involved contempt for them and this affected their behaviour. The severe nature of the work and the demand for speedy finishing of tasks did, I think, destroy any chance of kindly treatment.'

Futamatsu did what he was ordered to do even if he seems often to have thought his orders unreasonable and unfeasible. At one point a Japanese staff officer without adequate knowledge of railway engineering gave instructions about building the line up a precipitous path in an unrealistic fashion. His senior accepted the order and reprimanded Futamatsu for querying the order (see page 112): 'Here was an example of how military ethics could make a soldier accept an illogical order.' Obedience is demanded of service personnel, but in the Japanese army it had to be blind unquestioning obedience however wrong or stupid the order. As Escritt points out in his introduction 'justifiable pride in the techniques and skills of a civilian railway engineer makes him sceptical of the professional regular soldiers' attitudes'.

He admits (page 110):

'Even despite such conditions [as he had described] the railway was finally completed by the prisoners-of-war and coolies working with us. It is certain that the railway could not have been finished without their help. They defied the demon of ill-health and finished the job, and lamented the souls of the many victims whose bones lay in the jungle. It was probably the result of the indomitable spirit with which the survivors worked, even when it looked as if they were zealously labouring even in an enemy's strategic railway.'

This was a tragic episode in a war, which Japan could never have won unless the Americans and their allies had lacked the 'indomitable spirit', which clearly impressed Futamatsu.

The first thing I looked for when I took the book up was a map showing the line. There is no reference to a map in the table of contents. Nor is there a list of the photographs, which are inserted after page 64, but the second illustration is a photograph of a sketch map drawn by Escritt.

Despite the fact that the railway, which no longer exists, was completed seventy years ago the publication of this book is a valuable addition to the history of the war and of the sufferings of those who worked on it. The translation by Escritt was produced in the 1980s but required annotation, revision and editing which Professor Peter Davies has skilfully done.

To the Kwai - and back: War Drawings 1939-1945

Souvenir Press, 2006

192 pages

ISBN 0285637452

Review by Sean Curtin

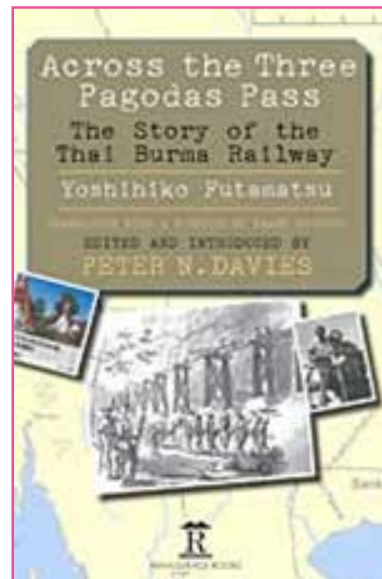
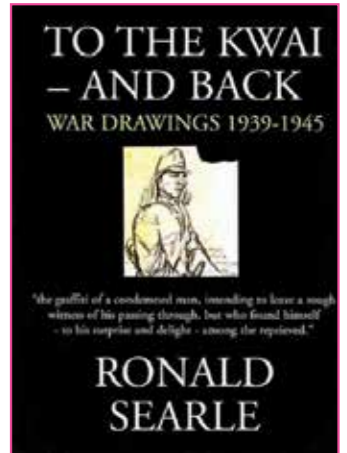
This disturbing book was previously reviewed back in Issue 3 (May 2006) by Sir Hugh Cortazzi but is worth examining again as it contains one of the best contemporary visual records of the terrible sufferings endured by the prisoners-of-war who built the Thai-Burma Railway.¹ Written narratives are often unable to convey the full horror of the inhuman regime which Ronald Searle's grim depictions so brutally portray.²

Searle (3 March 1920 – 30 December 2011) was a gifted artist who was captured by the Japanese in February 1942, remaining a PoW until August 1945. The book tells his story from the fall of Singapore to his survival against the odds and eventual liberation. The text is fairly limited allowing the many finely drawn sketches to tell their own gruesome tale. While Searle's focus is on his and fellow captives' suffering, I was also shocked by the extreme level of brutality Japanese troops inflicted on ordinary Chinese civilians. On page 66 Searle observes, 'It is estimated that 20,000 Chinese alone were shot or beheaded during the first few days after capitulation [of Singapore].'



Japanese troops with beheaded Chinese civilians

As one progresses through the book, the reader is confronted with an utterly dark world dominated by mindless cruelty and countless deaths. Life on the so called 'Death Railway' was mercilessly harsh, the author notes, '... it was no holds barred and any prisoner not visibly about to drop dead was forced to work. Needless to say, this did not decrease the casualty rate, nor did it speed the advance



Across the Three Pagodas Pass: The Story of the Thai Burma Railway

By Yoshihiko Futamatsu

Translated and introduced by Ewart Escritt

Renaissance Books, 2013

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi

The sufferings of allied prisoners of war forced

by the Japanese military to work on what was generally referred to as the Burma-Siam Railway and often as the 'Death Railway' have been recounted in many books by survivors. The film entitled *The Bridge on the River Kwai* attracted large audiences and many of those who saw it probably thought that it gave a fair picture of events, although this has been disputed by ex-prisoners of war and the story contained much that was fiction.

This book is the first publication in English of an account of the construction of the line by a Japanese railway engineer.

The line had to be built at top speed on the order of the Japanese army chiefs. Japanese forces in Burma had hitherto been supplied by sea, but they had become increasingly vulnerable to allied air attacks and to maintain the Japanese position in Burma supplies and reinforcements were urgently needed. Despite the huge technical and logistical difficulties of building a line through tropical forests, over

of the railway (page 110).¹ We are given a stark account of what the bleak daily regime was like and the tremendous loss of life it inflicted. Describing a typical day which would begin before dawn, Searle writes, 'When we reached the bare rock just above the river, we were put to work, cutting into it with hammers and chisels until it was too dark to see any longer. Then we struggled back up to the camp that we rarely saw other than by the light of the bonfire. After two or three weeks, when the cutting was finished, we were moved further on up the track to hack out another (page 108).'



PoWs endure brutal conditions constructing the Thai-Burma Railway

We are told of the regular sadistic torture Japanese troops remorselessly inflicted on the PoWs for their own amusement (pages 114-5). Searle fully understood the utter contempt with which he and his fellow captives were regarded, 'we were not, it appeared, recognized as conventional prisoners-of-war as established by well-meaning but misguided politicians, but as shameful captives. The traditional Japanese military philosophy allowing no alternative to victory but death, we were dishonoured, the despised, the lowest of the low (page 80).¹ While the physical treatment was intolerable, living conditions were equally unbearable, 'It was not only the labour that nearly drove us out of our minds; it was also the insects, that curse of the jungle, and they ate us alive. Mosquitoes and foul fat flies were a horror, and their bites were often fatal. But it was probably the non-killers that made our lives the most miserable. At night after work, tired as we were, we were kept awake by swarms of bedbugs that wandered over us, sucking our blood and nauseating us with their smell when we crushed them. Day and night the lice burrowing under our skin kept us scratching. Sometimes giant centipedes wriggled into our hair when we finally got to sleep and stuck their

million poisonous feet into our filthy scalps as we tried to brush them off, setting our heads ablaze (page 113).² Searle depicts an absolute living hell and it is hardly surprising that many of those who survived this unimaginable nightmare were deeply traumatized and psychologically scarred.

When Sir Hugh Cortazzi originally reviewed this book for Japan Society Review Issue 3 in May 2006, he wrote, 'I wish that Japanese historical revisionists and Japanese nationalists would read this book. They might then begin to understand why we object to Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and Foreign Minister Taro Aso paying their respects at the Yasukuni shrine where the Yushukan museum glorifies war and the Japanese military. They should be remembering all those who died and suffered during the war including the civilian dead in Singapore and, of course, in Japan itself.' Searle's vivid sketches brilliantly capture the horror of daily life on the Thai-Burma Railway which he compares to the Dark Ages, but adds, 'unlike the medieval warriors in the jidai-geki (period drama) of Kurosawa, there were no heroes. Merely killers and survivors (page 9).'



PoWs slave away in brutally harsh conditions from before dawn until after dusk

Notes

¹ Other PoW artists who recorded the horrors of the Thai-Burma Railway are John Mennie, Jack Bridger Chalker, Philip Meninsky and Ashley George Old. Ronald Searle is perhaps best remembered not as a war artist but as the creator of the fictional St Trinian's School and for his collaboration with Geoffrey Willans on the Molesworth series. The majority of Searle's original war work is on display in the permanent collection of the Imperial War Museum in London, along with the work of other PoW artists.

² See Sir Hugh Cortazzi's original review in Japan Society Review Issue 3 (May 2006)

Ways of Forgetting, Ways of Remembering: Japan in the Modern World

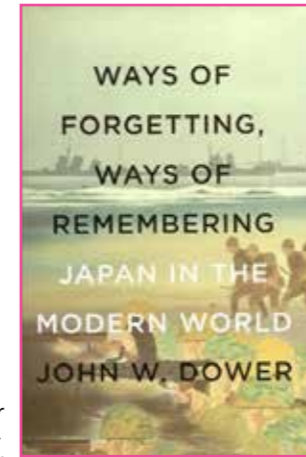
by John W. Dower

The New Press, 2012

324 pages

ISBN 978-1-59558-618-6

Review by Sir Hugh Cortazzi



John Dower, who is Professor Emeritus of History at MIT, has specialized in the modern history of Japan. His book *Embracing Defeat* was a penetrating analysis of Japan in the immediate post-war years. In this collection of essays Professor Dower concentrates on perceptions in Japan and the United States of the war and its aftermath.

The first essay focuses on the Canadian historian E.H. Norman who published the first scholarly study in English of the Meiji era. Norman, who had been appointed Canadian Ambassador to Egypt in 1956, committed suicide in 1957 following accusations in Senator McCarthy's inquisition into allegations of communist activities. Norman, as Dower makes clear, did not advocate Marxist revolution. He quotes a speech which Norman delivered at Keio University in 1948 on the theme 'Persuasion or Force: The Problem of Free Speech in Modern Society' which demonstrates Norman's commitment to free speech and persuasion rather than force.

Dower rightly rejected the idea put forward by some American strategists with little knowledge of history that the occupation of Japan could be a suitable model for post-invasion Iraq.

In discussing Norman's work Dower raises the question of 'whether the present emphasis [among historians] on narrow but 'deep' vertical research' makes for 'a fuller comprehension of Japanese history.'

His essay on *Race, Language and War in Two Cultures* asks: 'Given the virulence of the race hate that permeated the Pacific war, at first it seems astonishing that Americans and Japanese were able to move so quickly toward cordial relations after Japan's surrender.' Dower notes that 'Racism did not disappear from the US-Japan relationship, but it was softened and transmogrified.' 'Paternalistic patronage on the American side' was met with acquiescence on the part of the Japanese.

Japan's *Beautiful Modern War* discusses Japanese war propaganda which he thinks was 'brilliant, and without confronting it squarely we are doomed never to grasp the full nature of Japan's war - and, by extension, never to have the broad comparative perspective necessary to see how all peoples and cultures make their wars

beautiful, noble and just' [in their own eyes at least!]

Dower's essay entitled *An aptitude for being unloved: War and Memory in Japan* discusses the way in which many Japanese have come to see themselves as victims rather than aggressors. But he points out that white-washing and sanitization of history are not unique to Japan. The United States is still reluctant to accept responsibility for the carnage in Vietnam. He also reminds readers of the way in which the Americans for pragmatic reasons exonerated the Showa emperor from any responsibility "for policies and actions undertaken in his name." But this was not the only American cover-up. "The most appalling of these cover-ups was the case of Unit 731 involving high-level [Japanese] officers and scientific researchers whose practice of official, institutionalized murder is comparable to the crimes of the 'Nazi doctors'" He asks: "can it not be said that most nations, states, peoples, collectivities fall short when it comes to thinking in terms of equality and assuming a sense of responsibility for historical transgressions?"

Two essays deal with the results of American saturation bombing of Japanese cities and the atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The diary of a Hiroshima doctor which Dower quotes is moving with its "modesty and dignity" and "of course, pathos." But even in the Hiroshima peace park "the Japanese reveal themselves to be both victims and victimizers" by "keeping a memorial to the Korean victims from violating the central, sacred ground."

Dower's essay *Mocking Misery: Grassroots Satire in Defeated Japan* shows that despite Japanese privations in the immediate post-war years many Japanese still retained a sense of humour.

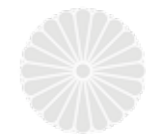
Dower rightly rejected the idea put forward by some American strategists with little knowledge of history that the occupation of Japan could be a suitable model for post-invasion Iraq. Somewhat mischievously he suggests that perhaps the Japanese occupation of Manchuria might be a more appropriate example.

Dower's new book contains much food for thought for anyone interested in modern Japan.

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Snow Falling on Cedars Directed by Scott Hicks

Based on the 1994 novel by
David Guterson

127 minutes, 2000

Review by Mike Sullivan

This is a story about the trial of a Japanese American, Kabuo Miyamoto, accused of murdering a white American, Carl Heine, over a land dispute, intertwined within this we see

the touching story of the town's newspaper editor, Ishmael Chambers, as a boy and in a relationship with Kabuo's present day wife, Hatsue Miyamoto. Both stories, both the trial and the relationship are heavily influenced by World War Two, for the young lovers this means slowly being driven apart as war approached, while the trial is permeated by prejudice following the war.

Before the war many Japanese people had settled in America and in consequence became friends, neighbours, business partners of other Americans, as well as forming relationships. Ishmael grew up with Hatsue and aware of attempts to keep them separated developed a strong friendship which as they became teenagers turned to love. However, World War Two would mean that this would break down. Japanese men were put into work camps, any items from Japan were confiscated and any white Americans who tried to maintain peace were despised for trying to defend their Japanese friends. Eventually Ishmael and Hatsue are forcibly split up as she was put into a camp and he went to war. Hatsue has no choice but to recognize the insurmountable differences between herself and Ishmael, and sends him a letter ending the relationship. Ishmael is left heartbroken, he loses his arm fighting against the Japanese and becomes a very bitter man.

The Miyamoto family were in the process of buying land from the Heine family when the war broke out, as they were unable to complete payment they lost their land and were negotiating to resolve this when Carl was found dead within the netting of his boat with a head wound. Kabuo suffers from discrimination as witnesses speak against him because of his race, despite being an American war veteran. The head wound is attributed to how the Japanese know Kendo and caused similar wounds to American soldiers in the war and on top of everything else the trial happens to occur during the anniversary of Pearl Harbour. Meanwhile Ishmael does his own investigation and uncovers possible key evidence, however torn between his past feelings for Hatsue and his own bitterness against the Japanese and her husband he withholds it. As the trial comes to a close he realises that he has to face his past and make a choice.

