

第21章

Hiding Atrocity behind Violence:

The Replacement of War Crimes with Formulaic Hollywood Violence: Pacific War Prisoner of War Films 1950 to 2015

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War movies have been made ever since people started going to see movies in theaters (see Paley, 1898), and have continued to be popular productions. Throughout film history, they have been used on the one hand to promote support for current wars and spread a country's particular stance on past wars, and on the other, albeit to a lesser extent, for social comment. Popular films about World War II continue to be produced even today, regardless of the fact that America has faced a long series of other conflicts since that war ended 70 years ago. These movies are particularly interesting to research, as they reflect different attitudes depending on which conflict the United States is involved in at the time of their release (Westwell, 2006). Eberwein instructs that study of a war movie requires it be contextualized "within its period" and that we should "determine its relationship to the culture in which it appears" rather than that of the time of the war it is depicting (2010, p. 60). That is, the World War II movie can tell us more about the society to which it is contemporarily speaking, than about that of the World War II

period itself. In this light, this paper looks specifically at prisoner of war and civilian internment movies about the Pacific War that are based on novels or published memoirs. Each depicts the lifestyles and tribulations of Allied soldiers or civilians who have been captured by the Japanese. This I hope will shed light on changes in attitudes about war and war crimes, a topic that is relevant to Americans today.

Such prisoner of war movies have moved along a spectrum throughout the years, and can be divided into three distinct stages. The 1950s to 60s saw movies that followed closely with the story provided in the published books they were based on, yet tended to overlook episodes of physical violence. Such movies include *The Bridge on the River Kwai*¹⁾ (1957), *King Rat*²⁾ (1965), *Three Came Home* (1950), and *A Town Like Alice*³⁾ (1956), the latter two about internment camps. On the other end of the spectrum are the World War II prisoner of war movies since 2000, which stray farther from the stories in the books each is based on, yet graphically emphasize the violence experienced by prisoners of the Japanese, even to the degree of adding additional violence that is not present in the books. Movies in this category include *To End all Wars*⁴⁾ (2001), *The Railway Man*⁵⁾ (2013), and *Unbroken*⁶⁾ (2014). The middle period centered around the 1980s, and saw movies midway between these two poles. *Merry Christmas Mr. Lawrence*⁷⁾ (1983), *Empire of the Sun*⁸⁾ (1987), and a miniseries television version of *A Town Like Alice* (1981), the latter two again about internment camps, stayed basically true to the stories in the original books, yet featured violence and suffering. While these mid-swing movies take up violence as a theme, many

1) Japanese titles of movies, when available, are given in footnotes: 「戦場にかける橋」

2) 「キング・ラット」

3) 「マレー死の行進」

4) 「エンド・オブ・オール・ウォーズ」

5) 「レイルウェイ 運命の旅路」

6) 「不屈の男 アンブローケン」

7) 「戦場のメリークリスマス」

8) 「太陽の帝国」

of the more serious war crimes and inhuman policies of wartime Japan are glossed over in a romanticized depiction of prison camp life.

In this paper I will introduce one movie from each of these three periods in order to illustrate these changes over time: *King Rat*, *Empire of the Sun*, and *To End All Wars*. These three works were chosen because they contained elements representative of each of these three periods. I will discuss both how closely the movies follow the content of the books they are based on, as well as what types of suffering are either emphasized or ignored. To be clear, I will not be comparing violence and war crimes to what actually took place historically in these locations. Rather, I will be asking what was neglected from the books when making the movies, and what was added to the movies that did not exist originally in the books. This should indicate both the messages the movies wish to relate, and the mood of the contemporary viewing public.

The 1960s: *King Rat*

King Rat (Clavell, 1962) is the story of several men and their experiences as prisoners of the Japanese at Changi Prison in Singapore. The story revolves around Corporal King, called simply "King", who trades illegally and utilizes the people around him in order to build up his own empire in the camp. Flight Lieutenant Peter Marlowe is a young British officer who can speak Malay, and who develops a strong friendship with King. Author James Clavell's personal experiences as having been a prisoner at that very location help to make the descriptions of life there very real, while the story and characters are pure fiction.

Forbes's movie of the same name (1965) is a very good likeness to the novel. The story pretty much follows the events of the novel, if shortened into a theater-appropriate length. In many places, scenes follow the novel line for line. As Changi Prison itself was run mainly by the prisoners with little interference from the Japanese, we see few examples of Japanese cruelty.

and the few that are in the novel are absent from the movie. On the other hand, Forbes does a very good job of communicating the degree of suffering caused by long-term lack of food and living in squalid, overcrowded facilities.

1. Hunger, Illness, and Living Conditions

Most impressive in this movie is Forbes's portrayal of the men's hunger. Of course the movie includes story elements from the novel that communicate the value of food to the prisoners: the trading of valuables for food, one's excitement over receiving another prisoner's share, and the danger faced by those who were found to have been stealing food at the hands of an angry mob. In addition to this, Forbes masterfully illustrates hunger visually. When King and Marlowe first meet, King offers him a fried egg. The moment the egg hits the grill, we see the sound and smell visually affecting everyone in the hut, most of whom have not been invited to the meal. Their eyes change, their faces twitch, and we can see their yearning for an egg crescendo. Throughout the movie actors and extras alike are all appropriately thin, illustrating the effects of malnutrition. When a paratrooper comes to free the camp after the war, he is appalled by the desperate and ragged state of the inmates, and is surprised to learn that they are officers. At that point the viewer as well is given a chance to compare a well-fed man to those after years of life in Changi. The visual impression from this scene at the end of the movie is very close to actual photographs of POWs on release from Changi (see State Library of Victoria Collections, 1945).

Other results of long-term starvation are also included in the movie, such as a decrease in emotional stability. Night scenes include moaning and whimpering from unnamed sources, and there are several scenes where many men gather to see an incident or altercation, but stand there with hollow looks in their eyes. We witness what Clavell describes as zombies roaming the camp day and night. More serious cases are men who invite others to tea with their long-dead wives, or the man who treats his murdered

chicken as if it had been his own child. As to death as a natural result of the illnesses related to malnutrition, the movie does not avoid showing the very sick dying one by one. Death beds and graves are frequently shown between episodes in the story. Putting all of these together, the movie gives the viewer a real feeling for the suffering and hopelessness felt by men in that prison.

Illness is also shown, but many aspects of the daily illnesses the men faced were probably difficult to show on screen. We especially see the danger injuries pose without proper medication when Marlowe develops gangrene in his arm. King's contacts and money work to save the arm, but the viewer understands that anyone else in the camp with a similar wound would have probably lost a limb. We see men going in and out of the hospital with problems, and people doubling over with cramps from dysentery. But the graphic descriptions of these symptoms and the resulting smells described in the novel are not evident. The relish for eggs as food is shown, but not their necessity in staving off beriberi.

The portrayal of living conditions is good, but again incomplete in some respects. The deterioration of clothing is well replicated, and the music creates a sense of the heat, the feeling of helplessness, and the slow passage of time. The heat is especially well illustrated with men often shiny with sweat, and shirts becoming stained with sweat within moments of being put on. Insects are included, and we can both see flies flying around as well as hear their buzz. Even the scene where prisoners gather cockroaches from the bore-holes (latrines) to be used as food is included in the movie. However, bugs are much more emphasized in the novel. We read about the "constant clouds of mosquitoes" at night (p. 105), and the "constant swarming flies" at the bore-holes (p. 117). In the movie, insects, especially flies, are usually seen only two or three to a scene. When in bed, the characters in the novel are constantly scratching at and popping bedbugs, and it was a custom for men to put their bunks on fire every three days in order to kill the bedbugs

that had accumulated. These and other hut creatures, such as lizards, are not seen or mentioned in the movie. And while the camp is not particularly clean on screen, we do not witness the smells of sewage, or comprehend the degree of filth that they were forced to live in. For example, the men's mattresses are often described with adjectives such as *soaking*, *sodden*, and *reeking*. When a Red Cross doctor comes into Marlowe's hut after the war, he wishes he hadn't sat down on Marlowe's bed "for he knew that all the beds were diseased" (p. 469). In this way, while the movie does a good job of portraying the prisoners' situation, the novel gives the reader a much more personal experience.

2. Japanese Violence

While there is very little violence at the hands of the Japanese portrayed in the novel, what little there is has not been included in the movie. We do not see any beating, shooting, or torture. The Japanese are mostly seen arriving when they have information leading to the confiscation of a radio. It is then up to the Japanese to punish those responsible, but we do not actually see the punishment on screen. Other camp punishments are handled by senior officers within the camp, and "handing someone over to the Japanese" is used as a serious and perhaps even unreasonable threat. But aside from guards walking the camp and the occasional raid, we see no Japanese at all in the area.

The most common punishment seen in the novel is being made to stand at attention for hours, and when the first radio is found, all hut occupants not arrested are made to stand for 11 hours. The ultimate punishment is being sent to Utram Road Prison, but what exactly happens there is not mentioned. Unlike in the movie, however, we do see that the radio owner, Daven, returns to Changi after his period of stay at Utram Road ends. He weighs only 70 pounds at that point, and dies in a coma the day after he returns. The reader can infer that he had endured horrible treatment.

Other acts of violence we hear of come from Marlowe's experiences before his transfer to Changi. He tells of unnecessary shootings of Javanese who do not follow camp rules exactly, and about being transported in an overcrowded and unsanitary boat where three die. The most shocking description is that of a kind Japanese guard they nickname Sunny who likes dogs. When one of his puppies refuses to move, he swings the puppy around by the leash, letting it fly into the air. "The pup must have gone fifty feet into the air. And when it fell on the iron-hard ground, it burst like a ripe tomato. . . Sunny went over to the pup. He looked down at it, then burst into tears. One of our chaps got a spade and buried the remains and, all the time, Sunny tore at himself with grief. When the grave was smoothed over, he brushed away his tears, gave the man a pack of cigarettes, cursed him for five minutes, angrily shoved the butt of the rifle in the man's groin, then bowed to the grave, bowed to the hurt man, and marched off, beaming happily, with the other pups and dogs" (p. 103). These being the only examples of Japanese violence in the novel, it does not seem odd to ignore them in the movie as they are not directly related to the storyline. Nor do they show by number or degree that a statement about violence needs to be made.

3. Story

Several aspects of the story in the novel are absent from the movie. First, people of other nationalities do not appear in the movie. There are guards of Korean and other descent, and one Korean guard tells about his upbringing in Korea and his treatment by the Japanese. We also hear about a British colonel's sadness that his Sikh soldiers went over to fight for the Japanese. In the movie there is one Malay guard, but the whole adventure taken by King and Marlowe to a nearby village is absent. We also do not hear about men who worry about wives and children living nearby yet are free because they are Asian.

Second, we also do not witness the threat the prisoners face coming from everyone else in the camp. The novel describes how a man without one or two buddies could not survive, because there would be nobody to guard his possessions 24 hours a day. Such vigilance was constantly necessary in camp life. In a chase scene, when King and Marlowe are almost caught in a big trade, the movie shows them being run down and cornered by MPs. However, in the novel, several groups are after the large amount of money they are carrying, and eventually the entire camp is. The Australian trader who King teams up with for this big deal has his own men after them, and the upper brass also knows of the trade and are themselves on foot that night, disguised. King and Marlowe can hear people talking in huts, and once they know of the chase, everyone joins in. We can see that any large amount of money or expensive item would be dangerous to possess in this climate.

Also absent is the men's longing for their women - romantic, nostalgic, and sexual. We do see Grey wishing that his wife doesn't think that he is dead and therefore take up with another man. But we do not see Marlowe's constant struggle to keep from remembering his girl in the village where he had lived during escape. Nor does he meet a girl named Sulina in the nearby village. The prostitute that King sees occasionally is not present. We don't hear Mac's worry over whether his wife and child survived an escape ship that rumor said had sunk, or Larkin's nightly fantasies of his wife cooking steak with eggs.

Homosexuality is mostly erased from the movie. We do see a doctor interested in the orderly Steven and hear a few derogatory comments made toward him, but Steven does not act overtly homosexual as he does in the novel. However, the novel treats homosexuality as a more central theme. We find all of the men a bit confused by their lust for Sean, who plays the female leads in plays and takes on a female persona in daily life. We learn in detail about Sean's transformation from a straight fighter pilot when he is ordered to play the female role in a play. Marlowe is racked with guilt in having once

tried to deny Sean's new identity as a woman, leading to a suicide attempt. After the war, Sean decides to walk into the ocean rather than face choosing between returning to society in his new identity, and throwing that identity away.

In this way, we see the movie focusing on the story itself, at the cost of some of the more serious themes in the novel. On the other hand, the experience of being a prisoner at Changi is well illustrated.

The 1980s: *Empire of the Sun*

J. G. Ballard's *Empire of the Sun* (1984) follows the experiences of Jim, a British boy born and raised in Shanghai, as he survives three years of Japanese internment camp life. When the story starts, Jim vaguely remembers the war of 1937, but by 1941 life for Europeans in the European settlement is basically stable in Japanese-held Shanghai. This all changes with the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, with international interests being taken over and international families being interned. Jim finds himself first having to fend for himself on the streets without any others from his own community. He then spends some time in a detention center for the very sick, finally being transported to Lunghua Airfield where he is put to work along with other civilian internees making a runway. The story then skips three years into the future when the Europeans at Lunghua have finished their work and are waiting out their time at the internment camp there. The war is taking a turn against the Japanese, and American blockades are causing food supplies to dwindle. Jim then experiences the instabilities of post-war China before being reunited with his parents. Although a fictional story with fictional characters, Ballard introduces the novel as being "for the most part . . . an eyewitness account of events I observed during the Japanese occupation of Shanghai and within the camp at Lunghua" (p. iv). And indeed, Jim's situation and even some of the events are mirrored almost exactly in Ballard's autobiography, *Miracles of Life* (2008).

At first glance, Spielberg's movie of the same title (1987) follows the story quite respectably, with only the expected tweaks for scriptwriting purposes such as cutting down on the number of characters, and shortening to fit a movie-length format. However, on closer inspection, several aspects of the changes made have muted some messages while strengthening others, changing the overall impression of the situation in China at that period and of the internee experience.

1. Hunger and Illness

Portrayal of especially hunger but also illness is lacking when compared with *King Rat*. Ballard's novel gives the reader a vivid account of both the feelings of a prolonged lack of food, and the ravages this takes on the human body. Illustrating this facet of prison life along with others is important because while not as obvious to people who have not experienced internment, the failure to provide sufficient nourishment is also a serious war crime.

Hunger starts for Jim before he enters the detention system. After being separated from his parents, we see him suffer a period of starvation and sickness in the novel. He starts out by eating cocktail biscuits found in his home and neighboring homes, and drinking water until the supply runs out. It turns out that this water is not clean, and he catches an unnamed disease from it, which leaves him feverish and weak to the degree that others try and avoid him. In the movie we also see him finishing off canned goods and in need of more food. We see him licking off the last of the water from the faucet. However, we do not see him lose any considerable amount of weight, and he is not seen to be sick. The novel, on the other hand, emphasizes his change in appearance, and how he barely recognizes himself in mirrors. He ends up avoiding mirrors, and it nags him that his parents might not recognize him when they see him. This is one driving force of his to find food. The movie does emphasize his hunger, especially when we see him

overcome by a desire for food when he meets the American named Basie, enough to not mind Basie going through his pockets. He eats ravenously. But this depiction is made through his actions and demeanor, not physical changes.

When entering his first detention center, in the movie we see a sick Jim lining up for his allotted boiled potato. He drops it and it rolls away, to be stolen by a young boy. Going back to get another, he is yelled at by a Chinese cook who throws boiling water into his face to get rid of him. This scene illustrates the desperation of the Europeans for food, the fact that Jim has nobody to look out for him, and the inflexibility of the prison meal system. However, it does not go so far as to illustrate the situation described in the novel in which the very sick are not tended to or fed. Those who were too sick or weak to line up at mealtime were not fed at all. Jim experiences this himself when he is ill, and later takes advantage of it by stealing bowls from the dead and near-dead. While now getting a regular supply of food, as opposed to when he was living on the street, it is still not a sustainable amount. This lack of proper nutrition facilitates the diseased in the center to progress towards death. In both novel and movie Jim realizes that this is a detention center meant only to allow the sick to die, but visually this is not apparent. Europeans clanking their bowls for food before meals in the movie seem more angry than desperate, and are all well-dressed.

Jim's transfer to the camp at Lunghua is skipped in the movie, but this is a journey that contributes both to the hunger and illness of its detainee passengers. Meant to be a day journey, no food is provided even when extended to several days. When the driver and guard go off to make and eat meals, the prisoners are simply left as they are in the truck, and forgotten about when the Japanese go to sleep. The health of the already-sick occupants deteriorates rapidly, including the wound of Dr. Ransome, whose face had been smashed with the butt of a rifle. His eye starts to close up with the swelling, and flies feed on the injury. When he reaches

the destination, he does not refuse to work out of principle, as in the movie, but rather cannot because he can barely move his clumsy body due to the infection. For this he is hit again. The degree to which the prisoners' states have deteriorated is illustrated when the British in a camp refuse to admit them on this account. Their diseases and the pools of urine and flies in the truck lead the camp British to say as an explanation for rejection, "There are children here" (p. 118-9).

Novel and movie then skip ahead to three years into Jim's stay at Lunghua Camp. The Europeans have completed their work on building the runway, and are living alongside the airfield. Their life there is almost idealized in the movie, starting with uplifting music as Jim runs through the camp on myriad errands and deals. But three years of an insufficient diet is ignored. Even the running in this scene would have been difficult for Jim, as the novel emphasizes that he often becomes lightheaded, especially when he runs. The movie shows a bustling community, with people gardening and a lot of laundry and ironing being done by women. While the movie does show scores of men sitting and looking off into the distance, the novel describes these latter days of the camp as being full of people who don't lift a finger but complain when others don't prepare the food, and the gardening is all Jim and Dr. Ransome's work. At one point in the sequence Jamie runs past some older men playing golf and joking, but in the novel it is "two old men stranded like ghosts in the middle of a conversation they had forgotten" (p. 135) that he runs past.

And with the food supply decreasing at a higher rate than people dying off, men in the prison camp are starved to "a skin's depth from the skeleton below" (p. 132). This total emaciation is not depicted in the movie, just as Jim is not seen to lose weight dramatically. Hunger has devastated not only their bodies but also their wills: "bare-chested men with knobbed shoulders and bird-cage ribs, their faded wives in shabby frocks, watching without expression" (p. 142). We especially see this happening with Mr. Maxted, the

father of Jim's friend before the war, and a man who Jim had looked up to in Shanghai's international society. Now he is a living skeleton, often seen rubbing dirt from the spaces between his ribs. The movie casts him as a much older man – more a grandfather than a friend's father – to show frailty rather than emaciation.

And Mr. Maxted is described in the novel as an “almost naked man,” while in the movie we see him as wearing a shirt, sports jacket, shorts, a hat and sneaker-like shoes. Jim is seen in a leather jacket, and detainees are all well dressed in the movie, if dirty. In the novel they are often referred to as being “half naked” in “ragged clothes”. Sometimes a completely naked person is mentioned, sitting or walking through camp.

Illnesses are not depicted in the movie, and while there are some people in the hospital and the one mosquito net is given to the person expected to die next, we do not see the degree to which illness is a major problem at the camp as well as a threat to all inmates. For example, even the fact that Jim has a “nagging pain in his teeth” (p. 147) or has to deal with pus building up in his gums shows the decrepit stage to which their bodies had come. In the novel, Jim reflects on how diseases takes shape: “The beriberi patients particularly unsettled Jim, with their swollen legs and waterlogged lungs, minds so confused that they thought they were dying in England” (p. 156). We also read about a man in his last stages of malaria. He is sitting outside completely naked, his “body rattling with fever.” His lips are white from lack of iron, and is whispering and singing in his own world. He then suddenly urinates down his legs (p. 177-178). Patients in the movie, however, seemed simply to be bedridden, without outward changes due to their illnesses other than seizures and occasional death.

When the internees are marched out of Lunghua at the dissolution of the camp, we do see in the movie the degree to which people fall over dead along the way. But the novel describes in detail how incredibly exhausting walking just a short distance is for all of them, especially due to the fact

that rations have stopped several days ago at the camp, and people's secret stashes have run out about two days ago. Nobody has had anything to eat in 48 hours, and for many, longer than that. When Jim is finally reunited with his parents, in the movie he has a vacant look, but they have changed very little. They are dressed as well as they were at the beginning of the movie. But in the novel, Jim is returned to his home where his parents, having "had their own war," sit vacantly on deck chairs in an untended garden while Jim is the one who still has energy to deal with life.

On the other hand, the hardships of the Japanese captors are also omitted. In the movie, the Japanese look healthier and better fed than the prisoners. But the novel emphasizes the fact that both prisoners and captors undergo long periods of a lack of food. And we also see the effects of illness: "The poor rations of the past year – the Japanese guards were almost as badly fed as their British and American prisoners – had drawn the last of the adolescent fat from Kimura's arms. After a recent attack of tuberculosis, his strong face was puffy and coolielike" (p. 128). Clothing also deteriorates over the years as it does for the prisoners. In the movie, all Japanese are well dressed. While the tatters of Jim's clothing rustling in the wind are often referred to, the novel also describes similar problems the guards are facing: Private Kimura had grown as much as Jim in his years at the camp, and his back "burst through his faded tunic, and only his ammunition webbing held the tattered garment together" (p. 127). Concerning Sergeant Nagata: "Like all the Japanese soldiers, the sergeant wore rotting boots through which his big toes protruded like immense thumbs" (p. 157). At one point guards and prisoners work on a fence to keep Chinese peasants out of the camp's food supplies: "Several of the Japanese soldiers were working shoulder to shoulder with their prisoners, ragged uniforms barely distinguishable from the faded khaki of the inmates" (p. 141). The movie, however, shows the captors as leading privileged lives at the camp. When Jim goes into the Japanese living area, we see a landscaped temple-like building, where

Sergeant Nagata is bathing outside in a wooden bath, with a servant pouring water over his head. Jim returns his polished boots, and steals a perfect round cake of soap with a Japanese character imprinted in it, which had been placed on a delicate bamboo mat.

While it is difficult to show the real effects of malnutrition on film and especially when using real actors, it is not impossible, as we saw with *King Rat*. The romanticization of prison life is dangerous in that some of the largest threats to prisoners' lives are being ignored.

2. Japanese Violence

Violent acts of the Japanese as the aggressor nation are portrayed differently in the movie and novel. The movie emphasizes Japanese physical violence mainly through beatings and hitting. We first see this when Basie and Frank, two Americans who are showing dubious amity towards Jim when he finds himself on his own in Shanghai, drive up to Jim's home after it has been repossessed by the Japanese. They are chased down and badly beaten by the Japanese now living in the house. Basie hands Jim his glasses to keep them safe during the beating, as if he is familiar with what form this punishment is going to take, as well as its intensity. The second such display happens three years later when Jim is living in the prison camp. Until Jim intervenes, Dr. Ransome starts to be beaten for having tried to prevent the Japanese from breaking the windows of the camp infirmary. The third instance is when we see Basie once again beaten badly for having stolen soap and a violin from the Japanese officers. These repeated bloody beatings of armed men against captives portrays the Japanese as people who use violence to punish.

Only the first of these beatings occurs in the novel, and in general we rarely read of such heavy beatings being used as punishments towards internees. The novel rather shows the real threat of death that the Japanese pose to both Europeans and Chinese, which is not visible in the movie. Even

before the Pearl Harbor day attack, Europeans living in Shanghai had to be on the alert in Japan-held Shanghai. When Jim mistakenly runs into a company of Japanese infantry, he feels bad about his actions because he has put his father in danger: "Solitary Europeans who strayed into the path of the Japanese were usually left dead on the roadside" (p. 22). Later, when being transported between camps, Jim approaches the Japanese resting for lunch to ask for water for him and the other prisoners. As a child, he is still running a risk, but an adult doing the same would have been foolish. Jim "realized that Dr. Ransome could not approach the Japanese so soon after their meal without being knocked down or even killed" (p. 103). Jim then attains a bit of status because he has "risked all" for a little water. Three years later when living in the prison camp, Jim sneaks outside the wire to set pheasant traps. Recently the American air attacks have made the Japanese jumpy, and this means that if they saw Jim outside, they "would shoot at him without thinking" (p. 127). Death is a constant threat to both the Europeans living in Japan-controlled Singapore, and later as internees. Such death which would probably be sudden, and possibly at the whim of the man holding the weapon.

The novel also features Japanese killings due to official policy. These show not so much personal actions by individuals, but rather the entire army's disregard for internationally agreed upon human rights. While British military captured at the time of the Pearl Harbor attack are kept in soldiers' camps, separate from the civilians in Jim's camp, men caught afterwards in the capacity of war are shot outright. After one American bombing of the area Jim sees two American pilots parachuting down: "Already a squad of Japanese soldiers in a truck with a steaming radiator sped along the perimeter road, on their way to kill the pilots. Jim wiped the dust from his Latin primer and waited for the rifle shots" (p. 152). Internees caught trying to escape are also shot after being caught and brought back. And finally, near the end of the war, there is mounting fear of the entire population of

Lunghua camp being killed off. Basie warns Jim that in other camps the Japanese moved prisoners and internees up-country to places where the allies could not see them in order to exterminate them. Basie tells Jim that “The Japanese always killed their prisoners before they made their last stands” (p. 185). The inmates of Lunghua are then actually moved to a ship that is to bring them up-country, but this plan is halted when they find that the ship has been attacked and is no longer in service. In the movie, the internees are moved from place to place with the promise of food rations, but it is not clear that they are in danger of being killed off as a group.

The Japanese treat the Chinese with even more disregard for human rights than the Europeans. In several instances Chinese are shot over minor crimes, and beatings to the point of death seem to be routine. In Shanghai Jim sees “one youth in a blue silk suit being beaten by two soldiers with staves. As the blows struck his head, he knelt in a pool of blood that dripped from his lapels” (p. 55). Later, during Jim’s transport between camps, he mentions matter-of-factly what kept them awake the previous night: “During the night the Japanese had been beating a Chinese thief, and the man’s voice screamed across the water-filled paddies” (p. 116). At Lunghua, poor Chinese trying to steal into the camp in search of food meet with grisly ends: “Those who survived in the guardhouse till dawn were taken down to the river by the Japanese and clubbed to death on the bank” (p. 141). Even Chinese working in the camp suffer beatings. In describing the guard room after being taken over by the released prisoners, Jim notes, “the once-immaculate floor of the orderly room, polished by the Chinese prisoners between their beatings” (p. 233). While the movie shows Europeans beaten as punishment in three instances, we do not see this happening to Chinese. Nor do we see the difference in treatment between Europeans and Chinese.

Another factor that we do not see in the movie is the difference in treatment between military men and civilians. The novel does not treat this issue in depth either, but does hint to it. One character who appears briefly

in the novel is missing from the movie. Lieutenant Price has been the victim of torture as well as imprisonment in inhuman underground prison cells, and we see how that has affected him. Jim is aware of this kind of treatment, and knows the difference in treatment between military prisoners and civilian internees. "Although emaciated . . . Jim had seen the same chalklike skin and deranged eyes in those prisoners released after months in the underground cells of the police headquarters. His chest and shoulders were covered with the scars of dozens of cigarette burns, as if his body had been riddled with a hot poker in an attempt to set it alight" (p. 232). He also understands the mental changes he was seeing: "Jim knew that Lieutenant Price would have liked to get him alone and then beat him to death, not because he was cruel, but because only the sight of Jim's agony would clear away all the pain that he himself had endured" (p. 236). This touch with the more severe camps of the area is missing from the movie.

One last aspect of Japanese violence is the reprisals, when punishments are given to the camp as a whole after the Japanese suffer setbacks in the war, either local or worldwide. Mentioned often in POW literature as well as movies, this is shown in both the novel and movie. In particular, after an air raid Japanese soldiers go around breaking the window panes of prisoner barracks, and in the movie those of the hospital. Reductions in food rations are also attributed to reprisals.

Being beaten almost to the point of death is in fact scary, and also life-threatening. However, it is often associated with being more of an emotional response, and emphasizing such punishments over impersonal shootings due to wartime policy ignores the real crimes of the war. Omitting the outright torture of military prisoners, scarring them for life both physically and emotionally, as well as the unequal treatment of the Chinese has the effect of glossing over the situation in Japan-held China.

3. Impact of War

As an eyewitness of the events of this time, Ballard, through Jim, shows us insight into what Shanghai had been before the Japanese came, how they changed it, and what Shanghai became for both the Chinese as well as the internationals living there afterward. A good deal of this is lost in the film, as would be expected, but some aspects are particularly misleading, resulting in the telling of an entirely different story.

First of all, after Pearl Harbor is attacked, the Japanese are seen to attack Shanghai in the movie. It starts with explosions off the waterfront, and then we see Japanese troops and tanks marching into the city. People, mainly Chinese, are all thronging the streets holding their belongings, and a tank bears down through them, crushing cars. We see Chinese soldiers scurry out to posts on the tops of buildings, and fire down. A shooting match ensues, and one Japanese is shot right in front of Jim. After the shooting, dead Chinese are hauled away off the roofs.

This depiction makes it seem as the Japanese were attacking the city of Shanghai and the Chinese people, whose military tries to defend themselves. However, the novel explains the situation completely differently. From before Pearl Harbor, the Japanese were already present in Shanghai. Once war is declared on the Allies, at this point the Japanese take over Allied interests including ships, companies, and homes in the international settlement. The Japanese are not attacking any of the Chinese or the city itself, and no Chinese military are shown to shoot at the Japanese. The Japanese are simply rounding up those of Allied nationalities, and taking over their property. The crush seen in the streets is not people trying to escape from the Japanese, but rather the usual crowds a bit more rowdy: "once again the crush and clutter of Shanghai had engulfed its invaders" (p. 30).

To illustrate the fact that China or Chinese are not under attack, the novel shows the crowds after this military action was taken: "The entire city had come out into the streets, as if the population was celebrating the

takeover of the International Settlement, its seizure from the Americans and Europeans by another Asian power” (p. 39). On the other hand, the movie shows celebrations happening not at this point, but after the U.S. takes control away from the Japanese at the end of the movie. Here, a parade is shown going down the street with Americans in sailor suits celebrating. Crowds of Chinese are assembled peacefully along the sides, celebrating with Chinese slogan flags and fireworks. This contrasts starkly with the ending of the novel, where the crowds in Shanghai are exactly as they had been before and throughout the novel: “gangs of pickpockets and pedicab drivers, prostitutes and bar touts, vendors hawking bottles of home-brew Johnny Walker, gold dealers and opium traders, the evening citizenry of Shanghai in all its black silk, fox fur and flash” (p. 278). No parade or celebrations in sight, Jim notices drunken American and British sailors arguing together. Seeing that the local Chinese are watching them, they jeer at the Chinese and then urinate down the stairs at them in concert. The movie shows the Chinese cheering the Allies’ victory over the Japanese, but the novel shows the Chinese cheering the Japanese take-over of the European interests.

Second is the impact the Japanese have on the city itself, or lack thereof. We can see this especially through the portrayal of human corpses in the movie and novel. Death is a major theme in both, but the appearance of corpses is timed differently to communicate different messages. The movie starts out with the image of caskets floating in the ocean, amongst wreaths of flowers. The caskets are broken, and we can see a body inside. This view is interrupted by the bow of a ship as it plows through them, and we immediately see that it is a military ship. The view is interrupted by a billowing imperial Japanese flag, which gives way to a view of the 1940s Shanghai waterfront. This juxtaposition of the caskets, Japanese war ship, and flag creates an impression that such deaths, the pathetic method of burial, and other social problems in the city are the result of the Japanese presence in Shanghai at that time.

The novel, on the other hand, depicts such caskets as well as other burial methods as simply common practices in Shanghai during that period. We see several ways in which the dead are put to rest. The coffins seen in the water at the beginning of the movie, and referred to frequently in the novel, are the results of one practice of the time. "Every night in Shanghai those Chinese too poor to pay for the burial of their relatives would launch the bodies from the funeral piers at Nantao, decking the coffins with paper flowers. Carried away on one tide, they came back on the next, returning to the waterfront of Shanghai with all the other debris abandoned by the city. Meadows of paper flowers drifted on the running tide and clumped in miniature floating gardens around the old men and women, the young mothers and small children, whose swollen bodies seemed to have been fed during the night by the patient Yangtze" (p. 26). We see referrals to these bodies whenever the river is mentioned, even when talking about the tide: "The tide was beginning to run, and the flower-decked corpses were following their heels to the open sea" (p. 66). Jim spends a bit of time in the Nantao area, whose creeks and canals are "full of corpses" (p. 74).

A second practice we see is the funeral tumulus, which is a stack of coffins in an earthen mound. This seems to have been a practice used in rural areas, and found in fields. The occupants are peasants. When traveling the countryside, both before and after his capture, such tumulus are often referred to. At one point before war breaks out Jim looks into the lidless coffins, and examines the old bones. He is struck by their individuality, which he compares to "the impersonal bodies of the newly dead, whom he saw every day in Shanghai" (p. 17).

Here we see reference to the third method: simple discarding of bodies and caskets in the streets. Jim often sees death in the streets of Shanghai, such as when the family is driving through the city he sees in the crowds "a party of young Chinese women in sequined dresses tripped over a child's coffin decked with paper flowers" (p. 23). When observing the effect of Pearl

Harbor on Shanghai, Ballard writes, "Wars always invigorated Shanghai, quickened the pulse of its congested streets. Even the corpses in the gutters seemed livelier" (p. 39). We can see a constant presence of death on the river, in the countryside, and in the city as a result not of war, but of the common practices of the time as well as the poverty, which he frequently attributes to the presence and practices of the international community. But in the movie, aside from the opening scene, such corpses are not featured or visible.

When Jim starts his life as a prisoner of the Japanese, he then has to come to terms with the deaths of the people around him as well as the possibility of his own death. These deaths are now the result of Japanese actions and policy, although it is death itself that intrigues Jim. He helps dig graves when others no longer have the energy, and wonders about God and what happens to the spirit. In the final stage, Jim then must come to terms with the deaths of his former guards.

Death is an integral part of Jim's life before, during, and after his war experience. But as with the changes in timing of Chinese celebrations, the movie puts death as a result only of war. The difference in endings of the movie and novel illustrate this. The novel ends with another casket drifting down the river, only to return again later. This implies that after all the upheaval of the Japanese taking over the city and then being thrown out, Shanghai is simply returning to what it had been and always will be. This message pairs well with the opening line of the novel: "Wars came early to Shanghai, overtaking each other like the tides that raced up the Yangtze and returned to this gaudy city all the coffins cast adrift from the funeral piers of the Chinese Bund" (p. 3). However, the movie ends with not a corpse but Jim's discarded suitcase floating in the water amongst flowers. This may signify mainly the loss of Jim's childhood throughout the ordeal, as that is where he kept his important memories. But the substitution of the suitcase for the caskets seen at the beginning of the movie also implies that

the violence is over – violence brought by the Japanese, who are now gone.

A third difference is portrayal of the security Jim finds with the Japanese. Jim has an admiration for the Japanese, which is also seen in the movie. But the movie only shows his admiration for their bravery, skill, and airplanes. In the novel, however, from the start of his separation from his parents, the Japanese offer him the only security that he can find, even if it is only slight. When a Chinese boy chases Jim in order to steal things off of him, Jim attracts the attention of a Japanese guard in order to get away from the boy: “Not for the first time Jim realized that the Japanese, officially his enemies, offered his only protection in Shanghai” (p. 42). A similar situation is shown in the movie, but in this case Jim runs in front of a marching parade and tries to “surrender” to them. Not only is he ignored, but he loses his bicycle, and the boy then continues running after him. The appeal to the Japanese has no effect, and in the end, it is a Chinese woman who shoos the boy away from Jim.

Later, Jim latches onto three Japanese soldiers who are keeping people away from the international settlement mansions. At first they give him the scrapings of their bowl after they eat, which is his first hot food since he started living on his own. For a week, until they suddenly stop appearing in the area, he makes a point of helping them and running errands for them. In return the soldiers always leave a little rice and fish for him, and once a candy. Jim receives no help or food from people of any other nationality, except Basie, who then tries to sell him to Chinese merchants.

Once a prisoner, Jim feels safer than he had before. During transfer through a notorious area of Shanghai he finds: “before the war a small English boy would have been killed for his shoes within minutes. Now he was safe, guarded by the Japanese soldiers. Jim laughed over this so much that the Dutch woman reached out a hand to calm him” (p. 96). The feeling of safety within the prison camp, not to mention the promise of regular if not sufficient food, continues throughout the years. Near the end of the war we

learn of the realities understood by prisoners but not guards: “Now that the war was ending, the Japanese guards were convinced that the British and American prisoners were constantly trying to escape – the last notion in fact, to cross their minds. . . By June 1945, the landscape around Lunghua was so hostile, roamed by bandits, starving villagers and deserters from the puppet armies, that the camp and its Japanese guards offered the only security” (p. 137). Chinese peasants looking for food gather outside the prison, never to receive anything, but waiting there nonetheless. This makes Jim realize the prospects of his compatriots if they are ever to be “set free”.

While the movie’s depictions of internee hunger and illness as well as captor violence soften the actions of the Japanese, the political message of Japan’s effect on China and the city of Shanghai disfavors Japan. Jim himself finds it difficult to grasp the fact that the Japanese are the only ones from whom he can expect protection, while they are also the biggest threat of instant death. This no doubt would be difficult to express in a Hollywood movie, where good and bad are usually given clear boundaries. This probably has led to their being depicted as “bad invaders” who simply need to be driven out in order for peace to be restored.

The 2000s: *To End all Wars*

Cunningham’s *To End all Wars* (2001) is a stark change from earlier movies mostly in the degree to which the movie veers from the story of the book it is based on. This may be largely due to the fact that the other two were novels, and therefore more amenable to direct transition to movie. Gordon’s *To End all Wars* (1963) is a memoir of his experiences as a prisoner of war in Singapore and Thailand, covering a long span of time and a variety of experiences. In order to adapt this to the format of a non-documentary movie, one would expect these experiences to be condensed, and numerous casual associates to be molded into a core set of main characters. This is indeed what happens.

A second major difference is an increase in the amount of Japanese violence shown. One reason for the total amount of violence shown to increase in relation to previous movies would be the location where Gordon was incarcerated; he was one of those in the forced labor camps in the north of Thailand, working on building the railroad through Burma. Of published memoirs, those in such locations comment on not only the increase in suffering from physical work, but also the increased brutality of the Japanese. When first captured, Gordon stays briefly at Changi, the prison where the movie *King Rat* takes place. In comparison to what he was to experience later, he describes Changi as “a paradise” (p. 48). And the further north one went the worse the conditions. Alistair Urquhart, in his memoir *The Forgotten Highlander* (2011), describes the camp at which Gordon spends most of the war “truly a holiday camp” (p. 203) compared to the camps further north. In this manner, one would expect more violence depicted in a movie that concerns camps in an area that was known for more hardships.

1. Differences in Story and Characters

For someone who has read the memoir, the biggest difference felt in the movie is probably the story being told. The memoir is mainly a religious journey. Gordon starts out doubting the benefits of the church services held in Changi. He sees many men turning to religion once they have found themselves in this unbearable situation, but he equates this with “a kind of insurance policy to protect them against personal suffering.” He sees religion as “a thing of shibboleths, formulas, and easy answers” (p. 55). Much later, after acclimating himself to a culture of selfishness necessitated by the need for self-preservation in a more demanding camp, Gordon is astonished when a prisoner named Dusty goes out of his way to help him recuperate from what looks like certain death. At the same time he notices a renewal of self-sacrifice within the camp, seeing more and more such selfless acts. The Bible helps him to understand this, and is a tool that he uses in bringing those

near death back from self-defeating moroseness. He writes in detail about how he feels the outward trappings of the church worked to turn away the common man, and he strives to bring the teachings of the Bible to people in a way that they can relate to. These experiences lead Gordon to go on after release to study theology, eventually becoming the Dean of the Chapel at Princeton University.

The “story” of the movie, on the other hand, is a debate between prisoners of whether or not to live for, and in the end whether to take, revenge on their tormentors. A charismatic prisoner, Major Campbell, establishes a loyal group and makes plans for escape. When their numbers are halved, they realize that escape is impossible and they change to a plan to take revenge on the guards to the best degree that they can before they are inevitably captured. When caught, all are executed except Campbell, who is saved by a self-sacrificing character named Dusty, loosely resembling the Dusty from the memoir, who has until then been against Campbell and everything he stood for. Although cowed by this act of selflessness, in the end the movie version of Gordon finds Campbell torturing their main tormentor in the ways he had tortured them. They fight, and in the confusion the Japanese commits suicide. Campbell is shocked and becomes confused, cradling the Japanese’s head in remorse. Gordon’s voiceover says, “What is the destination of hatred? When you look in the eyes of the enemy and see yourself, at what price mercy?” In the very end of the movie, we see the real Ernest Gordon meeting a Japanese translator from the war at a current-day war cemetery in Thailand, exchanging pleasantries. This movie does utilize religion to support the case for loving one’s enemies, or at least forgiving them, yet is not about religion. It is mainly about whether revenge is the right path to choose.

Not only is revenge not the topic of the memoir, but Gordon writes that no prisoners were interested in revenge once they were freed. He describes how the Japanese feared for their lives when the war was declared over,

but this was unnecessary: “‘Let mercy take the place of bloodshed,’ said these exhausted but forgiving men. ‘Not an eye for an eye, a limb for a limb’” (p. 205). He writes that the same situation held true in other camps. The revenge storyline of the movie did not seem to be a concern in the real situation, and the dilemma of whether to help others or save your own strength is not shown in the movie.

Second, the compaction of myriad memories into the experiences of a few men, while necessary for film adaptation, has several consequences. The movie is mainly about a group of men going through the years of life at one prison camp in the jungle. A fatherly figure, Lieutenant Colonel Stuart McLean, is the head of their group and is killed shortly into the movie, instigating strong feelings of revenge. Major Ian Campbell, mentioned above, is a charismatic leader and refuses to yield to the Japanese. Captain Ernest Gordon, the on-screen version of the memoir author, is lower ranking than the others, and is a passive character acting as the narrator of the story. Lieutenant Jim “Yankee” Reardon is an American who has “attached himself to the group” and displays a stereotypical American attitude. At first he is self-centered and materialistic, but after hideous torture becomes selfless towards others even to the point of sacrificing himself for the camp as a whole. The group meets Dusty Miller at the camp, where he explains many of the rules and quirks of the Japanese to them and the audience. He is a religious and selfless man. The Japanese are also represented by a few characters who interact with this group. Captain Noguchi is in charge of the camp, and is seen to be aloft in his splendid hut, usually drunk. Sergeant Ito is in charge of their daily discipline, and hands out punishments. Takashi Nagase is a young and meek translator who seems to feel bad about the situation of the prisoners and becomes happy with their victories. Nagase is a true historical character, who appears in person at the end of the movie although no translator is mentioned in the memoir, and his and Gordon’s paths did not actually meet during the war.

The first consequence of this scriptwriting technique is to hide the sheer volume of the operation, of the loss of life, and of the crime. Gordon describes the camp of Chungkai as a base camp for other camps located for several hundred miles along the River Kwai: "To begin with, Chungkai was a busy staging area, a mustering point of materials and fresh men." At the peak, Chungkai had "nearly eight thousand, a battered population, but one that was ever changing, ever shifting. Batches of new POWs arriving from Malaya replaced old hands as they were marched off to other camps farther up country. Friends, old comrades-in-arms, came and went, appeared briefly and disappeared. A few we saw again months later; many we saw no more" (p. 69). In his memoir, Alistair Urquhart also mentions the size of this particular camp as compared with his own: "It was the first time that I could grasp the vast, industrial scale of the railway" (2011, p. 194).

The movie does not claim to take place at Chungkai, where most of Gordon's memoir takes place. The camp they arrive at is shown to be Camp Kanchanaburi, a camp where Gordon spent only a short stay near the end of the war, and which is featured more in Eric Lomax's memoir, *Railway Man* (1995) and in the memoirs of several other POWs. But the set on the movie resembles neither Chungkai, nor Kanchanaburi as described by Lomax. Chungkai was located along the river, and prone to flooding and associated diseases. Lomax describes Kanchanaburi as alongside the railway, and served as a repair-shop for "construction gangs' tractors, the road-rail lorries, and, as time went on, the locomotives themselves" (p. 109). The camp in the movie is neither by a river nor by a railroad, nor is there repair-type work being done. The set in the movie shows only about six huts, which are seen to hold about 20 men each, in contrast to Gordon's description of the huts each holding 200 men. Views of the entire camp indeed show no more than 100 men, if that. Actions also make the scale of the operation seem small. For example, the Japanese area leader visits the camp and calls the main characters of the movie into the command hut. He announces to them

directly the plans for the railroad, adding to the impression that these few are the main people working on the railroad. The enormous loss of life is mentioned in voiceovers, but is not felt through visual images.

There are two other consequences of the experiences of many being represented by a few main characters. The first relates to the story. For Gordon's religious transformation, it is important that men who he did not know at all took special care of him when he became ill. In the movie, he is a valued member of a close group of friends, making their help seem natural. Another consequence is that the rate of violent acts seems higher than is told in the story. Over a period of several years, Gordon relates incidents of violence that he both experienced and witnessed, but also those that were told to him by others. The movie puts many of these together into the experiences of a very few, and over a very short period of time – sometimes combining several into a one- or two-day period. Although the techniques used to make this memoir are in fact necessary in order to adapt the story into a movie format, the consequences of those techniques need to be considered.

2. Hunger, Illness, and Living Conditions

Of the three movies, *To End all Wars* least illustrates hunger and illness. The actors have well-fed bodies, and they do not change over the course of the movie. One scene shows them receiving a very small amount of food for their rations, and being refused any for their colonel who is in the hospital. In response, a fist fight ensues, with one emaciated prisoner, seemingly of Asian descent and markedly different in appearance from all other prisoners, collecting the spilled food from the ground. But without any changes in physical condition or stamina, it is difficult for the viewer to understand the hardships being undergone by the main characters. The memoir states that in Changi they were given less than twelve ounces of rice per day, and meat, flour, sugar, and salt in such small amounts “that they were hardly

worth mentioning.” More important was the fact that the rice was highly polished “and therefore contained none of the essential vitamins, proteins or minerals” (p. 51). The situation got worse in Chungkai, where now they were also being worked to the limit: “In Chungkai we were being slowly starved. We were doing heavy work now, but our rations were no more than when we had been on light work. There were meagre quantities of meat, oil, tea and sugar, very occasional vegetables, and sometimes salt, but these were in such tiny quantities that they were of hardly any nutritional value. Our diet was rice, three times a day; and it was rice of the poorest quality, the sweepings from the godowns. Much as we hated it, rice might have kept us going had there been enough of it. But the most officially allotted to each man was four hundred and twenty grams a day. This figure was purely hypothetical, for so many Japanese quartermasters dipped into the supply along the line that far less than that was left by the time the rice reached us” (p. 70). No rice was allotted for the sick. The usual state of the men was “gaunt, hollow-cheeked, skin drawn tight over the bones” (p. 187). Gordon goes on to describe the immediate results of this starvation diet, which were “hunger, general depression and ‘blackouts’. Next came the host of diseases caused by vitamin deficiency – such as beriberi and pellagra” (p. 51). Lack of stamina in particular is missing from the movie, as the characters are continually engaging in fist fights and other physical bickering, which would seem unlikely to anyone who has read the memoir.

An insufficient diet is made worse by overwork, which further drains the body. Although the movie shows scenes of the men working on the railroad, a good deal of the movie shows them spending time in the camp with nothing particular that they are being asked to do. Gordon describes the actual work day thus: “Every morning, as soon as dawn streaked the sky – at about 5:30 or 6 o’clock – we were marched out of Chungkai to work at hacking out the right of way for the railway. We were not marched back until late at night. Sometimes, if there was a job to be finished, we were kept

at work into the early hours of the next morning. . . This was our routine seven days a week. There was no day of rest, no holiday, no hiatus of any kind” (p. 65-66). So daylight episodes within the camp were probably unlikely, and even at night there would have been little time or energy to engage with each other during the few hours they were allowed to sleep. Gordon writes that even a simple sermon to his church-goers left him “limp with exhaustion” (p. 184). Leading a life of such heavy work adds to the damage done by an insufficient diet.

The deaths resulting from overwork combined with a starvation diet are also muted in the movie. We see a hospital called the “death house” and a room full of corpses, but we rarely saw people dying from the diseases of malnutrition, or any reduction in the number of people around them in the camp. Gordon’s own train of physical problems are not shown in the movie. In his memoir, illness after illness are compounded to bring him to death’s door. Before the war, Gordon suffers a fractured skull and spine in an accident as a member of the Royal Air Force. An attack of malaria on the boat when he is fleeing the Japanese develops into malignant tertian malaria while he is incarcerated at Changi. He then is found to have intestinal worms, and later requires an appendicitis while still in prison. When put on a forced march on his way to Chungkai, Gordon is still recovering from amoebic dysentery, which keeps him in a “constant state of weakness” (p. 62). This is followed by diphtheria, which first prevents food from going down his throat, and then, because he was sent to work anyway, takes away his control of his legs. When finally hospitalized, he can no longer eat, and becomes unrecognizable to his associates. The movie gives a few images of hard work, and voiceovers describe the difficulty of working on an insufficient diet surrounded by disease and death. Bodies are seen to be thrown in the fire. Then Gordon is shown to have collapsed with a high fever, although the name of the disease is not given. The doctor pronounces that there is probably no hope of survival. While overwork and illness are

not ignored, illness as a constant state – and at most times a combination of illnesses – is not shown, as characters involved in plans and bickering are seen to be in perfect health.

Finally, the living conditions are sanitized in the movie, and look like the set for *Gilligan's Island*. They are all also set up for prisoner usage when they arrive, unlike in the memoir where at two locations Gordon and his group are sent to a simple pile of supplies. They first had to clear the land and build their own huts before they had a place to sleep. The finished huts soon deteriorate, and suffer greatly from the floods that filled them with mud and bugs. Gordon often uses the words *slummy* and *sleazy* to describe them. While at the beginning of the movie the prisoners' clothing is nicer than in the memoir, it does progress to loincloths for some. However, the memoir indicates that from the start, all men were naked at all times except for a loincloth.

In the movie, the huts for the Japanese are markedly better than those of the prisoners. They are seen to dine well in a civilized manner, well dressed, in rooms decorated with things of value. At one point we can see glass chandeliers. In another scene, the prisoners are carrying large quantities rice to be eaten by the Japanese. Gordon does not touch on the Japanese quarters, so we cannot compare. But from the description, there was probably little opportunity or even incentive to have items of high quality brought into the jungle for the living purposes of the guards. While they were better fed than the prisoners, it was not due to a rich and varied menu but rather because they would "dip into" the rice on its way to the prisoners, leaving less for all.

Overall, the hunger, illness, and living conditions are not shown in their full horror, which brings the focus on mistreatment to the sole act of violent behavior.

3. Crimes of Violence

The overall impression of this movie is very violent; this movie is introducing Japanese crimes of violence. However, the memoir does not give such an impression. Where is the difference? One contributor to the impression of violence is that introduced above, the molding of many people's experiences into those of one group of friends during a short period of time. We can find most of the violent actions in the movie described in the memoir, but whereas Gordon only mentions them matter-of-factly as asides to the story, the same incidents are given the spotlight in the movie.

For example, Gordon describes frequent beatings in camp life thus: "We were at the mercy of guards whose ugly native dispositions were not improved by the conditions under which they had to work. It was not uncommon for a guard to work himself up into a maniacal fury over a trifle and strike out at everyone in sight. Once one of the prisoners dared to remonstrate with a guard for what he considered unreasonable behavior. The guard immediately retaliated by bashing him over the head until he lost consciousness. Apart from such acts of major brutality the temper of the guards found expression in acts of pettiness. If we passed a guard while walking anywhere we were required to bow low, or be punished. Whatever expression we assumed during roll-call parades we were open to the accusation of looking arrogant, which was regarded as a grave crime against the Emperor, punishable by beating" (p. 58). We see this in the movie when the group is first brought into their camp. It is unclear that they are supposed to start counting off because the order is given in Japanese, so Sergeant Ito hits Campbell, the first in line. After Campbell starts the count off, he insults Ito under his breath. Ito then attacks him and starts beating him with a stick. Their colonel intervenes, and Ito deems to punish the Colonel in place of the Major. We then see the Colonel undergoing forced ingestion water torture. Soon afterward Gordon walks out of the hut to check on the condition of the Colonel, and unknowingly walks past a

Japanese guard without bowing. He is beaten unconscious. In this way, two examples of incidents which were "not uncommon" occur within the first few hours of incarceration.

On the other hand, because the members of this small group of friends is finite, death that results from violence is deemphasized, and recuperation is quick. For example, in the memoir Gordon relates one of these maniacal tirades he had heard of that ends in death. On a work party, a shovel is found missing at the end of a day's work. The guard "worked himself up into a paranoid fury" as nobody stepped forward to acknowledge the theft. He shrieks that he will kill them all, cocks his rifle, and gets ready to shoot the first man in line. At that point one man steps forward and claims that he has done it. "The guard unleashed all his whipped-up hate; he kicked the helpless prisoner and beat him with his fists. Still the Argyll stood rigidly at attention, with the blood streaming down his face. His silence goaded the guard to an excess of rage. Seizing his rifle by the barrel, he lifted it high over his head and, with a final howl, brought it down on the skull of the Argyll, who sank limply to the ground and did not move. Although it was perfectly clear that he was dead, the guard continued to beat him and stopped only when exhausted" (p. 102). When the work party later recounted the tools, they find that no shovel is in fact missing. In the movie, this happens in front of the entire camp, and they are told "the entire camp will be punished." Death is not specifically threatened, but all guards have their rifles pointed at the group of men standing at attention. The American Reardon, after having been humbled by previous torture, comes forward as the thief. Ito beats him repeatedly with a shovel, resulting in paralysis of his legs. During the beating, the guard in charge of the tools yells out that the shovel has been found. Ito reacts strongly, then beats the guard who miscounted. This time we see a bit of mania in his beating. Reardon eventually recovers, but requires a wheelchair after this point. In this way, the constant threat of death and the frequent witnessing of it at the hands of

paranoid guards is not communicated in the movie.

Another story of self-sacrifice is told in the movie, but again does not end in death. In the memoir, Dusty tells Gordon about the fate of Angus, a soldier who had been in Gordon's company. Angus's friend was sick and would probably die. Angus nursed him and gave him all of his food, and also ran black market excursions for extra provisions. As his friend regained strength, one day Angus simply fell over dead due to "starvation complicated by exhaustion" (p. 100). In the movie, this becomes the story of Dusty and Gordon, and Dusty faints from starvation after bringing Gordon back to health. In return Gordon then nurses Dusty back to health, and in no time at all both are back with the others taking part in work and camp life. The severity of lack of providing sufficient nutrition as a war crime is greatly underrepresented.

The movie uses other techniques to create a sense of violence, yet avoid the consequence of death. Most apparent is an addition of cruelty or meanness to the actions of the Japanese. The memoir does not indicate a mocking or mean streak in the violence; rather it cites either individuals who go overboard due to pressures, or condemns policies and attitudes that do not value the life of the prisoners. A comparison of Gordon's first capture in the movie and the memoir illustrates this difference. Gordon had been trying to escape from Japanese-held areas with several other officers by boat. They knew that capture would probably mean execution, and after days of sailing they find themselves overtaken by a Japanese tanker. They are roughly taken on board, searched, and kept under guard on deck until private interviews are completed. While waiting, Gordon asks one officer what is to happen to them: " 'You will all be questioned one at a time,' he said in clipped artificial English, 'and then you will be shot. You are spies!' " (p. 44). After the interviews are over, the Japanese receive orders from Tokyo to bring them to Singapore for further questioning. In the end, no order is given for their execution. The remainder of the trip to Singapore is

comfortable, and they are given freedom to move about the deck and drink as much water as they please. In the movie, on the other hand, they are blindfolded and shoved into a line at the shore. A lineup of Japanese across from them cocks their rifles, an order is given, and they all shoot . . . but into the air. Then the Japanese laugh and point derisively at the shock of the prisoners. Reardon says, "They're just playing with our minds!" They are then shoved roughly onto a truck for transportation. The horror of believing one's life to end in a few minutes is the same, but in the memoir, their lives actually were in danger because it was the policy of Japan at that time to shoot anyone trying to escape capture under the category of being a spy. Neither are condoned internationally, but the movie shows a deliberate cruelty not present in the memoir. Another example is the crucifixion of Dusty. In the memoir Gordon mentions being "suspended from a tree by their thumbs" as a common punishment that often led to death, and this was the fate of Dusty. After being separated early on, Gordon tries to find out what happened to him. Upon hearing the news, he remarks that it is as if Dusty has been crucified, him being such a self-sacrificing person. "There on that tree, like his Master, he died, so far from his homeland, so far from everyone, yet so near to God" (p. 211). In the movie, though, Ito finds a picture of the Crucifixion in Dusty's bible, and to spite his religion, which he calls superstition, he mimics this form of execution.

Finally, there are forms of violence that are unique to both movie and memoir. Crimes that are in the public spotlight recently are featured in the movie, while it ignores war crimes of a larger scale. Added to the movie without appearance in the memoir include water torture, comfort women, human heads displayed on spikes, and the forced loss of one's own culture. Those in the memoir but not included in the movie are using POWs as a human shield by situating their camp beside an important airfield, the threat of an all-out massacre at the end of the war, and similar crimes against people of Asian descent, which far outnumber those of Europeans.

Overall, the movie emphasizes physical violence over the crimes of overwork of prisoners without sufficient facilities for support, and a lack of regard for the value of human life.

Discussion

As these three movie adaptations illustrate, there has been a change over the years in emphasis from lack of basic human needs to crimes of violence. The portrayal of hunger is the most illustrative of this. *King Rat* gives the best visual portrayal of hunger and its consequences. While *Empire of the Sun* emphasizes hunger as a main theme of the movie, we see energetic people leading a romanticized life in prison. *To End all Wars* shows hunger and its consequences the least, but this is not due to its absence in the memoir it is based on. We see able-bodied men attempting to stand up to physical abuse.

On the other hand, while the depiction of crimes of violence increases over time, death and the threat of death is still not depicted to a degree found in the books they are based on. The usual Hollywood action-movie punching and kicking is given a more realistic bloody angle, possibly influenced by the fact that it is carried out on our heroes instead of a movie's villains. But like the typical action movie, everyone recovers quickly if not completely, and carries on with their mates for the rest of the movie. Death in the movies is utilized as a dramatic and extraordinary act of violence, with those responsible vilified and the victims mourned deeply. The fact that death was faceless and an everyday occurrence, whether from hunger or from the crazed act of a similarly hungry guard, is the real horror of the POW experience.

When a moviegoer sees the line "based on actual events during World War II," as shown at the start of *To End all Wars*, it is unclear which portions of the movie "actually" happened. One would assume the characters and the storyline are fictional, but wouldn't that mean that the POW camp lifestyle

and daily challenges were true to life? Wouldn't it be safe to assume that the extreme violence experienced by the fictional characters was similar to that experienced by actual prisoners of the Japanese at that time? Wouldn't it also be safe to assume that the explanations provided by the fictional characters for Japanese actions were true commentaries on historical events? A memoir or a novel written by someone who has actually experienced a prison camp is about as close as we can get to learning about conditions there. In spreading this information to those who have not read these books, it is therefore important not to change the message these POW survivors wish to share, and not to stray too far from what they considered significant, or not.

While bringing to public attention the crimes of violence committed by the Japanese is important, it is also important not to forget the humanitarian crimes committed against prisoners: starvation, lack of medical attention, overwork, and a disregard for human life. With the coming to light of torture and humiliation carried out by American military personnel in recent years, such crimes are increasingly seen in movies. Does the fact that other countries have done the same make our crimes more palatable? Does the absence of humanitarian crimes in Pacific War movies help us avoid confronting sweatshop practices and environmental crimes being carried out by our own companies today? World War II movies should both be accurate in their reflection of actual crimes, as well as aid us through awareness in ridding our current society of similar problems.

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