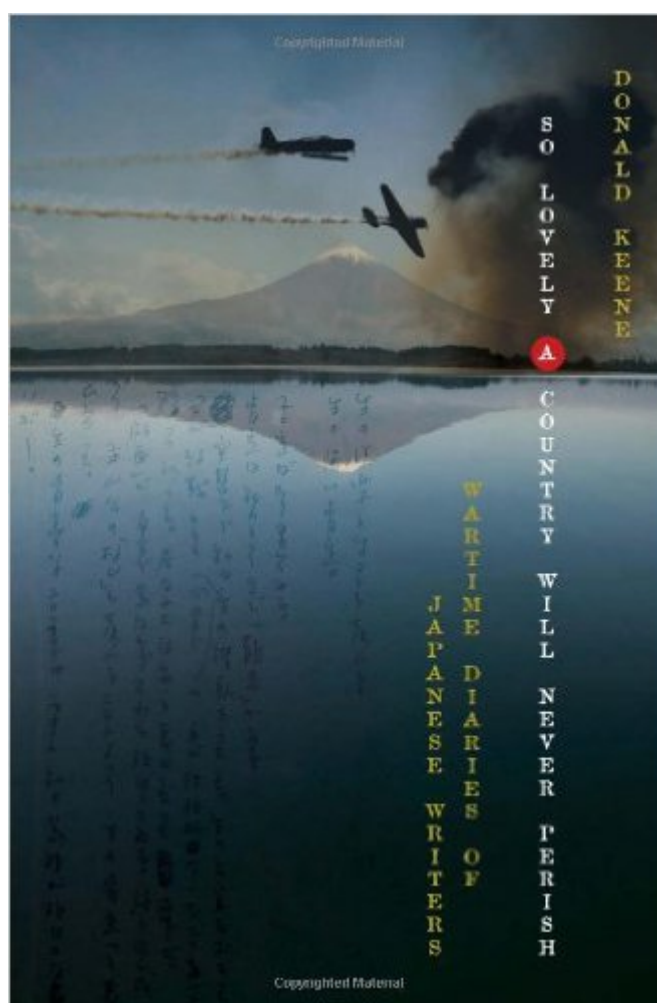


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So Lovely A Country Will Never Perish: Wartime Diaries Of Japanese Writers (Asia Perspectives: History, Society, And Culture)



Synopsis

The attack on Pearl Harbor, which precipitated the Greater East Asia War and its initial triumphs, aroused pride and a host of other emotions among the Japanese people. Yet the single year in which Japanese forces occupied territory from Alaska to Indonesia was followed by three years of terrible defeat. Nevertheless, until the shattering end of the war, many Japanese continued to believe in the invincibility of their country. But in the diaries of well-known writers—including Nagai Kafu, Takami Jun, Yamada Futaru, and Hirabayashi Taiko—and the scholar Watanabe Kazuo, varying doubts were vividly, though privately, expressed. Donald Keene, renowned scholar of Japan, selects from these diaries, some written by authors he knew well. Their revelations were sometimes poignant, sometimes shocking to Keene. Ito Sei's fervent patriotism and even claims of racial superiority stand in stark contrast to the soft-spoken, kindly man Keene knew. Weaving archival materials with personal recollections and the intimate accounts themselves, Keene reproduces the passions aroused during the war and the sharply contrasting reactions in the year following Japan's surrender. Whether detailed or fragmentary, these entries communicate the reality of false victory and all-too-real defeat.

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Customer Reviews

As Donald Keene notes, the records from the diaries written during the epic events of WWII in Japan are probably more truthful than records written after 1945. The diarists have recorded their

feelings at the time of the events, not as sanitised or re-rendered for a post-war world. And some of them are highly disturbing (and perhaps embarrassing for the authors) - all the more disturbing as they are from the diaries of educated and highly cultured writers. The bloodlust of Yamada Futaro is interesting - but I guess even far-right nutters can be good writers (did he still think Hitler was a fallen hero when the truth came out?). His desire for vengeance against the US and Britain continued on into the new world, looking forward to the next war and a reversal of fortunes, and was probably stoked by his disappointment that the occupying forces did not impose the reign of terror he expected. At worst, there was some crass behaviour he objected to - some of it unsurprising. I mean, what was the US thinking, flying large formations of B-29s over Tokyo in August 1946, presumably in some perverse celebration of the first anniversary of the war's end. Can't imagine it brought warm fuzzy feelings to the Japanese citizens looking up from the ruins of Tokyo. Other writers were also surprised by the conciliatory approach of the occupying forces - the fact that long desired freedoms were implemented by the foreign powers and not by their own government. These authors had seen the Japanese army's atrocities inflicted on citizens of China and thought that was the standard approach taken by a conquering army.

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