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Review of Internment during the Second World War: A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA.

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Rachel Pistol, *Internment during the Second World War: A Comparative Study of Great Britain and the USA* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017).

This carefully researched and clearly written comparative study of Britain's internment of German and Italian "aliens" and America's internment of Japanese and Japanese-American citizens in World War II offers a good introduction to the subject. Pistol's short volume, however, is thin on analysis and does not offer any major conceptual or theoretical breakthroughs. An introduction rightly points to the contemporary relevance of the topic, highlighting recent trans-Atlantic movements to scapegoat migrants, refugees, and other cultural or ethnic outsiders. As journalists have observed, the Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage's "Breaking Point" poster rehearses world-war propaganda against foreigners, while advisors to Donald Trump have even cited the legal precedent of Japanese internment to justify the idea of a "Muslim registry." Engagement with the polemicist Michelle Malkin's startling book *In Defense of Internment* (uncited) and the recent presidential pardon of Sheriff Joe Arpaio, who once referred to his illegal "tent city" in Arizona as a "concentration camp," only strengthen Pistol's claim that far-right forces are making the subject of internment suddenly pressing.

Having outlined the modern political stakes of the subject, Pistol moves on to a contextual history in chapter 1 by outlining anti-alien sentiment on both sides of the Atlantic. The mass influx of Jewish refugees in the late nineteenth century precipitated the 1905 Aliens Act in Britain, while Chinese exclusion acts in America along with the 1913 Land Law preventing Japanese immigrants from owning property, and the 1917 Immigration Act excluding additional categories of Asian migrants indicated the degree to which American law institutionalized racism and anti-alien sentiment. These are important early chapters for understanding the mass wartime internment of aliens, but the material in this chapter is framed too narrowly by legal concerns and does not consider broader shifts in politics and culture. The rise of mass democracy and American and British nationalism along with the development of "total war" are surely important to the history of internment and the categories of belonging and exclusion that it enforced. It is also surprising, in a chapter focused so heavily on race, that Pistol neglects imperial developments. Both in Britain and America, empire was a crucible for hardening racial views and ethnic conceptions of citizenship. On this note, internment camps were themselves products of Empire: the South African and Philippine-American Wars (1899-1902) offered early precedents for mass civilian detention later adopted in WWI and WWII.

Chapter two provides a balanced and informative account of camp life on the Isle of Mann and in the western United States. Pistol is strong when it comes to outlining the bureaucratic absurdities of internment and the ways in which it was counterproductive to British and American war aims. The controversial "loyalty questionnaire" at Japanese internment camps was more likely to break up families and facilitate the work of spies than it was to isolate real security threats, while the British camps immobilized (as German citizens) many refugees from Nazi violence who were passionate about fighting against the Axis powers. Pistol revisits infamous stories like the tragic sinking of the *Arandora Star*, a transport ship full of Italian and German internees being deported to Canada (here the empire appears, if only fleetingly, as a repository for unwanted metropolitan populations). The cultural and artistic production of prominent camp inmates is another highlight of the chapter, though this aspect of camp life is already well-known. The experiences of working class and less-educated

internees remains understudied and this volume does little to redress that lacuna. Pistol could also do more to follow through on her earlier emphasis on racism and anti-Semitism. Though she does note the irony that British internment camps often detained convinced Nazis alongside Jewish refugees, it remains unclear, from Pistol's analysis, whether anti-Jewish prejudice among camp guards impacted the day-to-day lives of inmates.

The third chapter is the most original contribution. Studies of internment usually treat the process of release and the dissolution of the camps as a cursory epilogue to the main event. Pistol, by contrast, offers a sustained examination of the various ways in which inmates could leave the camps, whether by committing to military service (often in segregated or less desirable units like the British Pioneer Corps) or by convincing a government tribunal of their loyalty. Pistol traces the lives of those who were released and the challenges they often faced. Japanese internees, in particular, endured hardships when relocated away from the west coast exclusion zone and to cities and towns with no visible Japanese community networks. Here they experienced discrimination in finding work and housing and those who did return to their pre-war communities often found their homes and possessions vandalized or stolen. These narratives are a welcome addition to our understanding of camp histories and the ordeals that unfolded even after release from barbed-wire holding centers.

A concluding chapter turns to the issue of commemoration by listing the vast array of novels, artwork, films and public history sites (replete with instructive photographs) that have kept memory of internment alive. Pistol's calls for public recognition of past wrongs are well founded. But while this chapter is useful to the researcher or instructor interested in consulting the array of post-war "camp literature" produced in Britain and America, it reads more like an annotated bibliography than a critical analysis. Apart from the history of Japanese redress—in which the disconnect between official state narratives and the memory of former internees seeking financial compensation is too obvious to miss—Pistol does not treat memory as a contested affair or consider the ways in which it can be distorted, manipulated, or mobilized to serve the political and policy goals of particular historical moments. Given the opening emphasis on contemporary relevance, it is frustrating that Pistol does not bring her story full circle by analyzing the politics of memory and its discursive and contested application in our current political moment. Nonetheless, those looking for an informed, practical, and straightforward description of British and American internment will welcome this volume.