

Reviews

Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing: A Pen American Center Prize Anthology. Edited by Bell Gale Chevigny. Forward by Sister Helen Prejean. New York: Arcade Publishing, 1999, xxxii + 288 pp., including notes about contributors \$27.95, cloth; \$15.95, paper.

Reviewed by Rachel Woodward, United States Air Force Academy

With 2 million American citizens in prisons across the country and what many are calling the prison-industrial complex beginning to rival the military-industrial complex of the cold war, it is not surprising that we are becoming more and more interested in who is in prison, why they are there, and whether prison is the solution to crime in America. Recent films like *The Green Mile* and *Dead Man Walking* reflect a growing skepticism towards a system that has doubled (from 1 million to 2 million) in the last ten years alone. *Doing Time: 25 Years of Prison Writing*, an anthology made up of the short stories, essays, and poems of 51 prisoners, echoes this sentiment. Reading the works of these prisoners makes one fact clear: America is still fighting a war—this one against itself. The isolation, brutal treatment, disorientation, and subjugation of those behind *Doing Time's* narratives are clearly reminiscent of the words of those who have previously fought for survival in an unfamiliar and hostile world, if in albeit different circumstances.

The anthology is a product of PEN (Poets, Playwrights, Essayist, Editors, and Novelists), which was founded in 1921 for the purpose of “consolidating world peace through a association of writers” (xix). PEN’s American Center is concerned with defending the rights of writers in foreign countries who have been jailed for their beliefs. This concern naturally extended to the United States when it became evident that prisoners in our own jail systems were being censored and even punished for writing (xix). Since 1973 PEN has encouraged prisoners to submit their writings for publication. Currently they receive about 1700 submissions a year. There are no criteria for selection set forth in the introduction, although editor Bell Gale Chevigny explains that she prized rich material, fresh language, and the absence of hackneyed formulas (xxviii). The anthology is divided into 11 sections that represent the

most-often recurring themes (initiation, time, work, family, race, death etc.). Each section is prefaced by an editorial explanation that appears to have more to do with the anthology's agenda than the works that follow it. At the end of the book each author has provided an autobiographical statement that includes date of birth, sometimes what each contributor is incarcerated for, and why writing is important to him or her. The demographics of the writers are diverse: some taught themselves to read in prison, others have multiple advanced degrees; some are serving 2-3 years for possession, others have life sentences or are on death row for murder. Oddly, most are born in the 40s and 50s with only 2 submissions from the post-70's generation and 7 from the 60's. Race and gender seem proportionately represented.

Despite the editor's persistent and intrusive rhetoric at the beginning of each section, there is much to be learned from the writers themselves about life in prison. The autobiographical notes often point out that the individuals write not to further a political agenda but "as a defense against the crushing isolation" (331), to create "a spiritual connection to God" (337), or because "writing is all I have" (341). Because composing for many of the inmates is a form of staying in touch with themselves and the outside world and not a vocation, much honest and self-revealing writing results. Additionally, because the subject matter is very foreign to most readers, the pieces are often both informative and unsettling.

One of the most interesting and reflective parts of *Doing Time* is the section on reading and writing. In the short story "Coming into Language," Jimmy Santiago Baca explains in vivid detail his transition from illiteracy to awareness. The story makes us aware of the tragedy of illiteracy and the cyclical nature of the disease. Particularly sad is the section where Baca is determined to teach himself grammar but can't get a textbook. When he asks his sister to buy one for him, she refuses, stating that bookstores frighten her. Baca tells us learning to read and write gave him something to lose for the first time in his life. He tells the reader: "There was no longer the distinction between the other and I. Language made bridges of fire between me and everything I saw" (104). Paul St John's essay "Behind the Mirror's Face" represents the darker side of language and may be the most cynical and disturbing piece in the collection. Whereas Baca believes language brings salvation, St John is certain it is only another means of manipulation. For St. John prison writing can never be anything more than a tool used by the establishment to gull the prisoners further into submission. He directly attacks

the idea that writing breaks down the walls of isolation, commenting that there is no freedom of expression in prison because it is all subject to “salaried censorship squads” (119) who use the words of prisoners to placate an overly-liberal public, a public, incidentally, who is not concerned with his rights and well being “except to feel real good that things aren’t as bad out in the world” (121). He notes that those who are so worried about his comfort might begin by “sending me some real food and vitamins” as well as “some real medical care, you know the kind that steps right to the business and [. . .] doesn’t wait for rigor mortis in order to proceed” (121). St John’s anger, cynicism, and resentment are palpable in this piece that so effectively uses language to deflate any good intentions the editors might have had.

Curiously, the anger that distinguishes St John’s writing is absent from that of most of the other writers. For them the horror of prison life is recounted in a mild, journalistic-like abstraction. Whether it is men making their way through prison becoming other men’s “bitches,” inmates being forced to care for the AIDS patients whom the guards don’t want to touch, men being gang-raped and beaten, the suicide watch that ends in scavenger-like raids on the victim, all are portrayed with the same detachment as comments on the sun rising in the yard or the birds nesting in the guard towers. In “Pearl Got Stabbed” Charles P. Norman recounts an inmate’s death in three short sentences:

He stabbed Pearl first, several times, as Jerome and the other prisoners stood and watched. Pearl fell by the shower, and Kilgore poured the paint thinner over his face and body, intending to burn him up. He tried to light a book of matches, but his hands were so bloody that the matches got wet and he couldn’t light them. (194)

Doing Time is full of scenes like this. Brutality and degradation are at best casual happenings. The bare, unsentimental nature of such pieces is what makes this book as disturbing as it is.

While much of the book’s power is derived from the rawness of the writing, there is also a stylized and sophisticated side to many of the contributions. Several authors have MFAs or Masters Degrees in English. Writing tutorials such as the Bedford Hills Writing Workshop produce very polished work, and some of the writers represented here are professional authors. Richard Stratton, for instance, is a regular con-

tributor to *Rolling Stone*, *Spin*, and *Newsweek* and recently won the Sundance Grand Jury award for his film *Slam*. While these pieces do not make up the bulk of the anthology, the reader looking for polished style and technique will not be disappointed.

In *Doing Time*, we see the representative word of what constitutes 25% of the world's prison population. The editors have sought to connect those prisoners around the world who have been jailed for their writing to our domestic felons who find themselves unable to write freely. That premise that America's prisons are the new Soviet Gulag is strained. Indeed, the perpetual intrusion and commentary of the editor make the pieces and their selection appear agenda-oriented and compromise the integrity of work that could stand on its own. That said, however, the book remains a worthwhile read. The writing, while not always technically sophisticated, is honest and aware. It introduces its readers to the brutal realities of prison and forces us to question the efficacy of the system. In short, *Doing Time* is worth our time.

The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post-Cold War. Robert D. Kaplan. New York: Random House, 2000, xix+ 201 pp., index. \$21.95.

Reviewed by Michael A. Round, United States Air Force Academy

The title of Robert D. Kaplan's latest book lets you know that what follows will not be a rosy prediction for the future. Skimming the "Contents" page reinforces that notion: "Was Democracy Just a Moment?" "Idealism Won't Stop Mass Murder," "The Dangers of Peace." Kaplan writes a disturbing collection of essays, especially disturbing because they are not the rantings of some wild-eyed survivalist. Instead, they are well written (clean, descriptive prose, well-informed by the ideas of others), thoughtful, and from a man who's had a first-hand look at what he writes about. The collection covers the 5-year period from 1994 to 1999, but the essays remain current, relevant, and credible. He links the physical world to human representations, perhaps misrepresentations, of it, then links these to a changing definition of war and warfare. While I question some of his recommendations, his acumen as observer/reporter is keen; the bulk of the collection deals with those observations.

Using Samuel P. Huntington's "The Clash of Civilizations" as his starting point, Kaplan points out the increasingly cultural foundation to violence throughout the world,

a run-down, crowded planet of skin-head Cossacks and *juju* warriors, influenced by the worst refuse of Western pop culture and ancient tribal hatreds, and battling over scraps of overused earth in guerilla conflicts that ripple across continents and intersect in no discernible pattern—meaning there's no easy-to-define threat. (29-30)

He goes on to quote a "long-range thinker for the U.S. Navy," Michael Vlahos, who says, "We are not in charge of the environment and the world is not following us. It is going in many directions. Do not assume that democratic capitalism is the last word in human social evolution" (30). Think of this in this election year while we spend our time worrying about a projected surplus, interest rates that may average 8.5%, and whether or not the "market economy" is a curative for anything that ails us.

Kaplan sets the following scene in Turkey:

Built on steep, muddy hills, the shantytowns of Ankara, the Turkish capital, exude visual drama. Altindag, or “Golden Mountain,” is a pyramid of dreams, fashioned from cinder blocks and corrugated iron, rising as though each shack were built on top of another, all reaching awkwardly and painfully toward heaven—the heaven of wealthier Turks who live elsewhere in the city. Nowhere else on the planet have I found such a poignant architectural symbol of man’s striving, with gaps in house walls plugged with rusted cans, and leeks and onions growing on verandas assembled from planks of rotting wood. (30-31)

While this is a bleak picture, Kaplan surprises the reader as he notes the strong points of the slum and comes to the following conclusion:

My point in bringing up a rather wholesome, crime-free slum is this: its existence demonstrates how formidable is the fabric of which Turkish Muslim culture is made. A culture this strong has the potential to dominate the Middle East once again. Slums are litmus tests for innate cultural strengths and weaknesses. Those people whose cultures can harbor extensive slum life without decomposing will be, relatively speaking, the future’s winners. (32)

Kaplan sees the world trudging inexorably to a conflict initiated first by colonialism, then by the bifurcated post-World War II hegemonies of the United States and the Soviet Union, spheres of influence that essentially used the remnants of colonialism to their own advantage.

One of the remnants of colonialism remains in the maps we use. Citing Benedict Anderson of Cornell University, Kaplan critiques the rhetoric of maps:

Maps, Anderson explains, “shaped the grammar” that would make possible such questionable concepts as Iraq, Indonesia, Sierra Leone, and Nigeria. The state, recall, is a purely Western notion, one that until the twentieth century applied to countries covering only 3 percent of the earth’s land area. Nor is the evidence compelling that the state, as a governing ideal, can be successfully transported to areas outside the industrialized world.

Even the United States of America, in the words of one of our best living poets, Gary Snyder, consists of “arbitrary and inaccurate impositions on what is really here.” (39)

In the face of such large-scale problems, the best Kaplan can do is to voice the hope that pessimism will engender prudence:

Indeed, those who quote Alexis de Toqueville in support of democracy’s inevitability should pay heed to his observation that Americans, because of their (comparative) equality, exaggerate “the scope of human perfectibility.” Despotism, Toqueville went on, “is more particularly to be feared in democratic ages,” because it thrives on the obsession with self and one’s own security which equality fosters [. . .] many future regimes, ours especially, could resemble the oligarchies of ancient Athens and Sparta more than they do the current government in Washington. History teaches that it is exactly at such prosperous times as these that we need to maintain a sense of the tragic, however unnecessary it may seem. (60)

Kaplan cites Toqueville further as he makes the argument that we misunderstand our own history, that democracy “evolved in the West not through the kind of moral fiat we are trying to impose throughout the rest of the world but as an organic outgrowth of development” (66). Kaplan disdains moral arguments alone to support democratic development; “historical and social analysis” (67) must precede democratic inclinations.

The most direct military impact the changing world will have is on the intelligence industry, a “military growth industry”:

The public will demand protection—for as few tax dollars as possible—from a whole new kind of enemy that is using technology to miniaturize and conceal explosives and communications devices. The future will thus be brutal to industrial-age armies with big tanks and jets, and kind to corporate-style forces in urban settings, which rely on both electronic and human intelligence. (106-07)

Moreover,

Terrorism, drug smuggling, money laundering, industrial espionage, and so on will all evolve into new forms of “conventional” warfare that provide authoritarian leaders with the means to wage war without ever acknowledging it. (109)

Kaplan’s future is a believable combination of *Rollerball*’s transnational corporate world and *Blade Runner*’s ecologically ruined one. He moves from what the new wars will look like to “The Dangers of Peace,” warning specifically about the danger of a strong United Nations:

The U.N. bureaucracy, along with others who seek a peaceful world, worships consensus. But consensus can be the handmaiden of evil, since the ability to confront evil means the willingness to act boldly and ruthlessly and without consensus, attributes that executive, national leadership has in far more abundance than any international organization. [. . .] Though the U.N. is certainly not about to dominate the world, it carries within it the seeds of a banal, bureaucratically distant organization, inflexible because of the vast territory it would have to manage, and lacking accountability because of its received claim to progressive rationality. Such an organization would not rule through violence but by ably delegitimizing—perhaps, with the help of an all-powerful global media—anything and anybody that crossed its path, by defining such opposition as “immoral,” “unprogressive,” “provincial,” or “isolationist.” (178-80)

Where does the United States fit into all this? Citing Carr’s *Twenty Years’ Crisis*, Kaplan sees international goals “best realized through national self-interest” (181), urging a U.S.-dominated U.N., conceding

That, of course, may not lead to peace, since others might resent it and fight as a result; but such an action would fill the world’s organization’s insipid ideological vacuum with at least someone’s values—indeed, ours. Peace should never be an expediency. Whether it was the Korean War, the 1991 Gulf War, or the weapons-inspection regime against Saddam Hussein, the U.N. has always been most credible when it was an accomplice of U.S. foreign-policy goals. (181)

He goes on to warn that our world closely resembles the world just before W.W. I. But then again, let's look at his examples above: we're still in Korea, still in the Middle East, still in Bosnia and Kosovo. Is the solution here that we should simply become an occupation force throughout the world? If so, we create more American targets, spread more ill will for terrorists to exploit with "post-industrial miniaturization" (183) all for rather unspecified "foreign-policy goals." In the end Robert Kaplan argues that peace is well and good in theory, but problematic in practice; "struggle, of one sort or another, hopefully non-violent" is a better solution for mankind's sociological/cultural problems, since

Struggle demands the real facts, as well as real standards of behavior. [. . .] [W]ar ultimately demands credibility, whereas long periods of peace do not; with no threat at hand, lies and exaggerations carry smaller penalties. (184)

On the surface the above sounds too easily hip. Philip Knightley's essay, "The First Casualty," in which Knightley highlights the loss of truth during war, provides a counterpoint to Kaplan's contention that war is where we'll find "the real facts." Other notions jumble a bit for me here, too. Peace should never be an expediency? If struggle is our natural state, then why wouldn't we sometimes see peace purely in terms of expediency? What is the "hopefully non-violent" struggle to consist of? Economic competition? Capitalism is eventually going to run its course, as Kaplan suggests early in the book, but when he urges us to extend our values through the U.N. he's urging economics more than anything, since over the last 20 years, democracy and capitalism have become virtually inseparable to us. But if democracy is an outgrowth of "social and historical arguments," so is capitalism and so is socialism. Further, the whole credibility of the war vs. peace assertion rings a little hollow. In the information age, disinformation is the real growth industry; we've found that "is" ain't what it used to be, that "smart" weapons have a lower I.Q. and more limited applicability than advertised (see Paul F. Walker's and Eric Stambler's essay "[. . .] And the Dirty Little Weapons"), and that advertising is the persuasive vehicle of choice, not argument (see Kathleen Hall Jamieson's *Eloquence in the Electronic Age*, a domestic commentary that none-the-less carries relevance for foreign affairs considerations, too). The real anarchy isn't coming, it's here, and it has to do not so much with the environment, weapons and crazy people—we've always

had our share of those and Kaplan presumes that the responses to weapons and crazy people will remain basically the same—as it does with words and images as the stealth weapons of choice, and the crazy ways that people have bought into words as transients, rather than stable residents of our world. Words/images are the battleground of cultural and sub-cultural wars. When they become transients, so do values and ideas.

Ultimately, my criticism of Kaplan pertains to his predictions, not his reporting. His observations of our world, the things he draws our attention to, are vital considerations for national security:

To understand the events of the next fifty years, then, one must understand environmental scarcity, cultural and racial clash, geographic destiny, and the transformation of war. The order in which I have named these is not accidental. (18-19)

Kaplan claims the last two, “new approaches to mapmaking and to warfare—are the most important. They are also the least understood” (19). His book tries to fill those gaps in our understanding, and, for the most part, does an excellent job.

The Book of War: Twenty-five Centuries of Great War Writing. Edited by John Keegan. New York: Viking, 1999, xix+ 492 pp, list of sources, index. \$34.95.

Reviewed by Elizabeth A. Muenger, United States Air Force Academy

John Keegan has assembled and edited an impressive collection of writings on war, a feat not necessarily as easy as it once might have been, given the proliferation of such anthologies in the last decade. As usual, Keegan has gathered his selections from a vantage point just oblique enough to add a new perspective to what we would normally expect from “great war writing.” As he has done for the last thirty years, Keegan forces us to consider war and things military from expanded parameters. We hear from the vanquished French at Agincourt, from an old woman remembering being held prisoner by Indians during the course of the American Revolution, from an “Arab-Syrian gentleman” who opposed the Frankish crusaders in 1131. The breadth of the selection alone makes this book a valuable addition to any library and a necessity for any military historian.

The beauty of this collection, however, lies in the Keegan touches of a graceful introduction and an arrangement that isolates selections into clashes between cultures, hostilities involving regular armies in established European states, and finally, war in the twentieth century. Keegan has two major themes that bind the whole collection—that from Thucydides to Terkel, the crucial importance of the warrior spirit remains, and that “the history of all forms of warfare is [. . .] essentially inhumane.” Indeed, given the non-combatant witnesses Keegan has summoned, his attention to the “warrior spirit” element seems muted, at best.

Accompanying most of the entries are Keegan’s individual introductions to the selection, placing it in both chronological and contextual perspective. This strategy allows Keegan his wise words of commentary reminding the reader of the subtleties, ironies, and contradictions that are inescapable in conflict. The old woman, for instance, who applied for a pension on the grounds of her imprisonment by Indians under the pay of the British during the Revolution, had an impressive survival rate as a captive; she had also been held for three years by Indians when she was a child, during the French and Indian War. Captain Roeder, an officer in the Hessian Lifeguards who accompanied Napoleon on the Russian cam-

paign of 1812, missed most of the major battles on the road to Moscow, and indeed, missed Moscow itself, having been detailed with his regiment to protect communication lines and ferry supplies forward. His narrative of the retreat from Moscow, however, has all the power and horror of a battle itself, as the army attempts to retrace its steps and escape the Russian winter, "somewhat fantastically attired in priestly vestments and even women's gowns as a protection against the cold." Some choices need no introduction, but instead draw their power from their very unlikeliness of choice. Do we meet again Stephen Crane's blue serpent army, coiling and uncoiling down the road to Chancellorsville? No. Instead we read Crane's poem "War is Kind," with its bitter cynicism and deadly restraint. In the selections from the Zulu war battles of Isandhlwana and Rorke's Drift, two Zulu warriors and two British officers provide the eyewitness accounts. We meet Rommel as a lieutenant in World War I, describing his company's attack on a French position in 1917; of Feldmarschall Erwin Rommel there are already traces.

There are only the smallest of critical bones to pick about this fine collection of war writings. A complete source list traces the origins of each of the selections, but in a few cases, Keegan could have added information and interest within his introductory remarks. A word or two about the battle of Blenheim, and Robert Southey's role in English letters, would have been welcome, especially for those Americans who are not military or literary historians. The same might be said for Elizabeth Custer's hagiographic role in proselytizing her husband's memory. Who is Helen Roeder? A great-granddaughter to the Napoleonic captain? What was her editing method? None of these small omissions are in any way crucial, but Keegan is so successful in engaging us with his selection that we might as well also request the full history lesson. This book is not for the military history buff, but for the thoughtful historian in any field.

Scenes From the End: The Last Days of World War II in Europe.
Frank E. Manuel. South Royalton, Vermont: Steerforth Press, 2000, ix
+ 135 pp. \$20.

Reviewed by Edward F. Krise, Hilton Head Island, South Carolina

Scenes from the End is a personal narrative from the perspective of a U.S. Army intelligence officer and prisoner-of-war interrogator, covering the period of time from the Battle of the Bulge in December 1944 to the occupation of Leipzig in May 1945. It is based upon notes written immediately after the author returned home on VJ-night, along with letters written to his wife. Fifty years later, Dr. Manuel found his material and assembled this memoir on the collapse of the Third Reich.

Although military historians may be looking for a thorough chronological narrative, Dr. Manuel lets his readers know from the start that *Scenes from the End* is not intended to provide mere facts: "Conversations reported here have passed through the smoke screen of memory, recollections of the spirit, rather than the precise detail, of events" (viii). As the author of fifteen academic books, including *Utopian Thought in the Western World*, which he wrote with his wife Fritzie P. Manuel and which won the 1993 National Book Award, Dr. Manuel shows a sophisticated understanding of how this new book departs from a purely academic purpose: "Military historians have assembled a picture of the grand design, creating the myth of an official history; but fragments may be closer to the chaos of experiences in war before it has been subjected to cleansing" (viii). Accordingly, Dr. Manuel notes that "the style and technique of these sketches derive from the movies, with their abrupt shifts of scenes and persons, to which the reader has to adapt" (viii). I did not find this to be a problem. The narrative flows vividly and evenly with a prose characteristic of an accomplished writer.

Dr. Manuel begins by briefly tracing his origins in a prosperous Jewish family in the Boston communities of Dorchester and Roxbury. As a student at Harvard, he received fellowships that enabled him to study in Europe, where he was exposed to an "enraged, screaming Hitler" (3). *The Nation* employed him as a correspondent in Spain, from which he departed just prior to the Spanish Civil War. Upon his return home, Manuel was appointed a regional director for the Federal Writers Project and later to the Office of Price Administration as well as the Office of War Information. The Army "snatched" him away and following several mal-assignments he was commissioned in Military Intelligence. Fluent in

French and German, Manuel was classified as a German prisoner-of-war interrogator, shipped to London in November 1944, and then to Paris.

Manuel's "baptism of fire" (the title of the first chapter) began when he was assigned to the 21st Corps of Seventh Army. He offers a general description of the unit's tactical situation and experience, first in reserve and then defending the left flank against German efforts to extend the perimeter of the Alsac pocket near Colmar. By late February, they reached Weilhime and Bad Tolz. On 30 April, Hitler committed suicide, which was followed by the surrender of the German High Command on 7 May. The 21st Corps and Manuel were then ordered to Leipzig.

Dr. Manuel describes the disorder and chaos at the end, noting the behavior of the French as the "conquered reconquering" (17). He depicts the Fatherland as one vast battlefield with the dead unburied in the forests, boxcars stalled in yards, and weapons scattered everywhere. He tells about the aimless movement of German troops as "everything had lost its meaning except getting out alive and returning to Hilde and the kids" (25). The last defenders of the Reich, Dr. Manuel notes ironically, were "weeping children and sniveling old men" (26).

The several layers of the German government including civil, party, military and SS units attempted to maintain some form of defensive posture, but "finally the hour had come for the besieged town. Snipers on the outskirts fired their last rounds. Flagwavers destroyed their swastikas and substituted the white of purity and surrender" (45). Dr. Manuel goes on to describe the reaction to defeat, including a wide variety of psychological defenses by the number of German citizens ranging from the common folk—"little Michels"—who remained loyal to their Fuhrer, but kept their feelings secret; to the few who resorted to guerilla warfare; to the homeless imported workers; and even to the German High Command.

Dr. Manuel addresses the issue of the Holocaust, too, in a fascinating chapter entitled "Remnants of Israel." He recalls a mass funeral service for Jews, who were continuing to die in the last days of the war, at which a rabbi says, "Let not the Germans who are standing here feel that we are full of hate. Because we are not. We leave judgment to God. The crimes are too grave for man to understand, to believe that they come from man" (76). Manuel's own identity as a Jew adds complexity to the narrative, especially when he describes his exchanges with some Polish Jews:

They quickly recognized the American Jewish officers and in the traditional, ingratiating manner asked, "*Ihr seit a Yid? Ich bin oich a Yid*" (Are you a Jew? I too am a Jew). And then they poured forth their tales of woe, how nobody cares for the Jews who were starving in Warsaw. They wanted to report war crimes and to narrate their experiences. For a moment they made me feel part of the victorious army of farm boys and I told them that nobody was interested in their suffering. And they said I did not have a Jewish heart. I was only trying to deny myself in them, and them in myself. (87)

The final two chapters bring several more interesting episodes, as when Manuel reflects on his attempts to collect the books published in Leipzig, in order to send them to the Library of Congress and the British Museum. It turns out that the German soldiers got tired of reading Nazi Party literature: "What, no Nietzsche in your knapsack? No Nietzsche. A few Goethes here and there and even a bit of Hegel; but no *Mein Kampf*. The Party literature [. . .] gathered dust, while German soldiers clamored for translations of *Gone With the Wind* to comfort them through long nights in cellars and foxholes and pillboxes" (134). The role of Nazi propaganda in the war is well known and may tempt us to dismiss the German soldiers as automatons, but Manuel's insights into the soldiers' reading preferences evokes sympathy; these soldiers were human beings, too.

This narrative was of special interest to me, since I witnessed "the end" from a different perspective—as a 20-year-old prisoner of war. The retreating German Army on the Eastern Front elected to take their prisoners with them, and I participated in a 59-day trek from what is now Czema, Poland, to Celle (near Hanover), Germany. I observed many of the same discontinuities in German behaviors as noted by Dr. Manuel; for example, during one escape attempt, a fellow Ranger sergeant and I were recaptured and placed in a local city jail. We were booked, mugged, and fingerprinted, even though the sounds of the Russian guns were audible in the distance, by a sheriff who looked like the epitome of a Prussian officer. All of the sudden, he broke into uncontrolled sobbing. He discovered that my buddy had the same birthday as Adolph Hitler!

Scenes from the End succeeds as a memoir because it captures truths and complexities about the war that a mere history book could not, and yet it also rings true with my own experience. In his intentionally fragmented memoir, Dr. Manuel creates enough space for us to see ourselves there—to remember our own war, or to imagine ourselves in his.

Literature at War, 1914–1940: Representing the “Time of Greatness” in Germany. Wolfgang G. Natter. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999, 280 pp. \$35.00.

Reviewed by Rouven J. Steeves, United States Air Force Academy

At a time when ever-increasing professional specialization breeds highly detailed studies of the arcane, it is both refreshing and illuminating to read a work which transcends disciplines and frames specific literary considerations in the larger context of cultural and historical progression. Wolfgang Natter’s examination of German literature during 1914–1940 is one such multi-layered study. It at once exposes the reasons for the rise of a bellicose, culturally chauvinistic stream of literature before, during, and after the First World War (the “Time of Greatness”) while engendering an awareness of the danger inherent in the creation and manipulation of cultural capital by political forces. With respect to the latter, Natter especially bemoans simplistic analysis by scholars who study a work of literature but not the work of its formation.

Literature at War is in many ways a study of the war wrought on literature. Examining the “extraordinary proliferation of volumes and genres” of war literature, Natter—employing a harmonious mix of literary criticism, historical analysis, and case studies—argues that notions of unadulterated authorial inspiration must be tempered in light of overt and covert cultural and socio-political constraints imposed upon the author (4). Thus, as to the question whether the composition of literature is ever a purely aesthetic undertaking, Natter emphatically answers that the “effacement” of the considerations of social production and circulation is “the illusion on which rests the claim for literature as a purely poetic, autonomous realm of creation, an aesthetic construct that I reject” (10). Instead, Natter espouses that his study “emphatically links both meanings of *Geschichte* (history and story) in connecting past events with the storytelling of these events” (2). He argues not for historical or literary relativism but rather for the thorough examination of literature informed by an astute awareness of underlying socio-political and cultural forces.

Hence, in Chapter 1: “What is War Literature and Why Does it Merit Study?” Natter “describes” many of the “issues that a reader must weigh in determining the meaning of the war in the literature” and “why it is necessary to pursue the general question of how—through the interac-

tion of military, academic, and publishing agencies—a particular knowledge about the First World War was created and disseminated” (11). Unearthing and scrutinizing the vast depository of “nationalistically oriented literature (in some cases accorded canonical status after 1933) that was once widely read but is now largely forgotten by scholars” (2), Natter exposes the extensive censorship scheme with which the German army and state “took active steps in disseminating a type of writing imbued with what, both then and after defeat, would be labeled *Frontgeist* [the spirit of the trenches]” (36). Analyzing both active forms of censorship, undertaken by such agencies as the *Kriegspressestelle* (War Press Agency) and individuals such as the *Offizierkriegsberichterstatter* (officer war reporters), and reactive forms, in the guise of editorial censors, Natter argues that the “original translations” were “framed within the state-administered mechanisms that engendered the illusion of a seamless national identity and will, covering up incoherence or contradiction” (6).

The German idea of *Geist* in its various embodiments—the nationalistically infused *Juli-Geist* of 1914, the *Frontgeist* characterizing the brotherhood of soldiers, or the *Volksgeist* of the National Socialists—evokes a spiritual, veritable pseudo-Christian idea of redemptive history—of a people set apart for greatness. It is a theme which ebbs and flows throughout the literary currents of late nineteenth, early twentieth century Germany and which finds poignant articulation in Walter Bloem, both as author and head of the *Kriegspressestelle*.

The synergy of state and author working in tandem to dictate a national narrative of greatness are here clearly evidenced. In his historically fictive trilogy of the Franco-Prussian War, published prior to the Great War, Bloem repeatedly evokes the theme of the birth of nationhood, which is “both the content and the integrating principle of the novel” (48). Bloem’s nationalistic stance steeped in Germanic heroism propels him to the head position of the *Kriegspressestelle* during World War I, where he is able to constructively shape *die Zukunft* (the future) to conform to the envisioned narrative.

A similar synergy of purpose is noted in Natter’s consideration of Philipp Witkop’s anthology, *Kriegsbriefe gefallener Studenten* (War letters of fallen students). Characteristic of this and other genres of war prose is the spectacle of their birth. Beginning with state institutions and the military hierarchy admonishing writers to exercise “self censorship,” warnings of reprisals follow for letters that are not expressive of

“silent heroism” and the heroic ideal. The birthing process ends with multiple levels of censorship from army units to the editor ensuring a product that conforms to the developing national narrative (88).

Natter further develops the extent that such synergy was imposed by considering the dissemination of reading material both at home and on the front undertaken by the “army, the *Volksbildung* (popular education) movement, and publishers” (9). Specifically with regard to publishers, Natter analyzes the importance of individual firms “producing inexpensive literature at home and for the troops” which promoted national ideals. The case study focused on the Cotta publishing house is especially poignant, for it is reflective of an industry largely intent on framing a “war consonant with the ‘spirit of 1914’”—even after defeat (9).

In the final case study of Bruno Vogel’s anti-war polemic, *Es lebe der Krieg! Ein Brief* (Long live war! A letter), Natter examines the unequal struggle over the national narrative in light of the unexpected defeat. The court trial and punishment of Vogel and his publisher “amply indicate that the state censorship of works dealing with the First World War was indeed continuing after [. . .] Germany’s surrender in November 1918” (193). In fact, the “Christianized” notions of the national narrative found even greater impetus as the National Socialists manipulated the idea of a nation born for a great destiny but betrayed (*die Dolchstoßlegende*) and forced to suffer an unjust “crucifixion” at Versailles. Under National Socialist leadership the time had come for the resurrection of the spirit of the nation born in the trenches and the movement “toward the full presence promised in 1914—a powerful and unified nation purged of particularities or contradictions” (208). As Natter concludes, “National Socialism completed the tautology prefigured by the propaganda work of a wartime culture industry” and embroiled Germany in another world war (208).

Literature at War is a fine interdisciplinary study, which deconstructs without succumbing to deconstructionism—that *Geschichte* is not a simple thing. If the work can be faulted, it is only in that while Natter rightly demands greater scholarly scrutiny of literature from the “Time of Greatness,” and while he poignantly alludes to the greater danger of simplistic historical and literary examinations, he leaves the implicit question—how can greater objectivity be achieved—largely unanswered. Still, he clearly poses the problem, leaving another to proffer a clear—or at least clearer—solution. In the end, Natter’s work poses the challenge to think critically without succumbing to skepticism—to focus on detail while

recognizing that the part must be understood in light of the whole. Neither literature, nor culture, nor history exists in a vacuum. The study, then, is a work in progress, not only in the historiography and study of literature in the period 1914-1940, but moreover as an examination of the “dense cultural capital at stake in the articulation of the political between 1914-1940, and furthermore, the extent to which normative culture, however unactualized for anti-hegemonic purposes, has been a strategic site for the orchestration of the political” (206).

A work’s greatness is not dominantly determined by its timeliness but timelessness. As a study warning of simplism in scholarship, and even more so warning of the danger of permitting literature and culture to be manipulated by any force, Natter’s *Literature at War* accomplishes both by emphasizing lessons man forgets time and time again.

Hart's War. John Katzenbach. New York: Ballantine, 1999, 490 pp. \$24.95.

Reviewed by George Luker, United States Air Force Academy

Many times we learn best about the truth of history through fiction. While fictionalized prisoner-of-war experiences such as those found in David Westheimer's *Von Ryan's Express* and Kurt Vonnegut's *Slaughterhouse-Five* distort some facts, and perhaps even revel in the free play of historical data, they wind up revealing truths about those captivity experiences in ways that laying out linear details rarely can. John Katzenbach's latest novel, *Hart's War*, is one such fictional tale. It is clearly a fiction: the setting for the narrative, Stalag Luft Thirteen, is a fabrication, a "composite of several camps," Katzenbach admits; the plot and characters are likewise inventions (489). And yet readers will be treated to solid research taken from sources such as Lewis Carlson's *We Were Each Other's Prisoners* and Westheimer's *Sitting It Out*.

Katzenbach's best source for his novel—and in a very genuine and significant way the person to whom the book is dedicated—is his own father, a B-25 navigator who was shot down over the waters of the North African theater on a skip-bombing mission and then captured by the Germans. From February 1943 to the end of the war, Katzenbach's father spent his life as a PW. For a short time he was held in Italy, and then later he was shipped to Stalag Luft Three in Sagan, Germany, close to the Polish border. All things considered, the elder Katzenbach's experiences are remarkable and worthy of their own story. When the war started, the senior Katzenbach had been studying pre-law at Princeton. After he was shot down and settled in as a prisoner at the German PW camp, he was able to obtain enough books from the YMCA and study them long enough so that when the war was finally over he was able to pass two year's worth of exams in six weeks. In fact, he graduated from Princeton on time with his class. The lesson that Katzenbach and his family took away from the "mythic" values that father imparted is that "an opportunity could be created out of any situation, no matter how harsh" (490).

Having mentioned all that, it should come as no surprise, then, that Katzenbach's main character is a B-25 navigator interned at a German PW camp. He is a "kriegie," a shortened German term that allied prisoners used to refer to themselves, who studies his small number of law

books during the countless hours of prison life. In the face of very austere conditions and the strict confines of the fictional Stalag Luft Thirteen, many opportunities nevertheless present themselves in this novel, a novel that could be considered a detective story and a provisional courtroom “whodunit.” After a brutal murder is committed in the American sector of the camp, the main character, legal “expert” Lieutenant Tommy Hart, is chosen by the camp’s Senior American Officer to defend the only Tuskegee Airman in camp, accused of murdering another kriegie, a white racist American flyer. With help from two RAF prisoners who live apart from American prisoners, a former Canadian police detective and a famed British barrister, Tommy Hart’s assignment is to prove the lone black flyer’s innocence. Hart’s task becomes daunting since the murder looks like a frame-up and racial prejudice runs wide and deep at the camp. All the evidence places guilt squarely on the black man, so in order to prove his innocence, Hart needs to find the actual murderer or murderers. His only chance to solve the crime within this controlled prison community is to unravel all of the motives, means, and opportunities for the murder to take place. As it turns out in this case, motives and means are less important than opportunities.

Unmistakably, the concept of opportunities is important to Katzenbach’s whole story. Just as his prisoners generate opportunities at Stalag Luft Thirteen, Katzenbach himself crafts many opportunities to show readers what life was like in World War II German PW camps. He demonstrates, for example, that in those camps American and RAF flyers were treated relatively well compared to their Russian counterparts who were literally worked to death. That even though the western allies received marginally better treatment, all prisoners suffered from constant starvation, freezing temperatures, paralyzing fear, and relentless tedium. That racism can find a way of overriding misery. That misery measures the depths of one’s self. That the word “enemy” can be a slippery term. *Hart’s War* reminds us in the end that we rarely know when we’ll have to fight our greatest battles, but by glancing backward through historical fiction we may better anticipate the important conflicts in front of us.

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