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Rachel Waltner Goossen. *Women Against the Good War: Conscientious Objection and Gender on the American Home Front, 1941-1947.* Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997. xii + 180 pp. $27.50 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8078-4672-8; $49.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8078-2366-8.

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Women Religious Pacifists and Conscientious Objectors: What's Gender Got To Do With It?

In *Women Against the Good War*, Rachel Waltner Goossen synthesizes a wealth of primary and secondary materials on women's roles in the Civilian Public Service during World War II and the effects of those roles on women's postwar understandings of themselves. Drawing from 27 interviews, 153 questionnaire respondents and extensive archives, Goossen places women religious pacifists' work as conscientious objectors on the map. *Women Against the Good War* sets out to deepen our understanding of women's pacifist legacies by documenting the lives of the women attached to the Civilian Public Service (CPS) who "offered moral and material support to conscripted men who shared their convictions" (p. 4). In doing so, the book draws an important alternative study of women's pacifism on the basis of religious conviction from within oppositional communities, namely those of the historic peace churches: the Mennonites, Brethren in Christ, and the Friends. While these three were the major players, other church groups and some secular organizations joined the drive to establish the CPS as an alternative for drafted Conscientious Objectors. Goossen seeks to analyze the reproduction of and the challenges to gender roles in the CPS camps. To do so, she presents a history that spans from the eve of U.S. formal involvement with the war and the institution of the CPS, to the postwar period, the CPS dissolution, and the legacy for the women she studied.

The book is of particular interest to scholars of World War II, peace scholars, and women and war scholars because of its unique story of pacifist women not so for the sake of gendered norms of peacemaking, but rather through their religious convictions. Like histories of women's soldiering, [1] it demonstrates that not all women understand their relationship to the military and war through the conventional associations of women and peacemaking. Documenting the histories of the CPS camps, and women's roles within and around them, Goossen tells a fascinating story of the construction of alternative culture and daily life in opposition to the "good war." She effectively covers the details from the invention of the CPS to the dailiness of the work for men and women, the financial hardships, discrimination, struggles over and for children, and the issues surrounding married and single women's work and their social relationships to the camps. Goossen shares with the reader, through her research, the stories of these women's choices to go against the dominant culture of consensus over the "good war" and describes the profoundly empowering impact that those choices often had on the women's lives.

In the heat of the debates over universal conscription in 1943 and 1944, Goossen shows the influx of young college women to work as "CO Girls" (COGs) by their recognition that they themselves might soon be forced to take a public antiwar stand. Thus, women who were pacifist camp followers as well as women looking for an individual way to take a stand against the war were associated with the CPS. They negotiated a complex set of cultural norms, both reflecting the dominant patriarchal culture and defying it by their challenges to those norms in the daily world of the CPS camps. As Goossen reflects from her interviews, "Throughout the war a creative tension existed between the COGs, who wanted to address human need as conscientious objectors in their own right, and church leaders, who utilized them to raise the esprit de corps of male conscientious objectors" (pp. 104-105).

This history in some important ways, parallels other histories of women during this time period, [2] as Goossen herself recognizes, through its attention to the changing opportunities for women via the absence of men stateside as workers. Goossen does not, however, recognize the ethnic and class-based specificity that al-

lows a story to be told about sudden opportunities in the workforce for women previously circumscribed by the home. Nevertheless, the parallel desires and conditions to fulfill them were evident in the white middle-class women who went into the war industries and the white middle-class women who went instead to the CPS camps. Goossen shows quite well how these parallel opportunities provided Conscientious Objector women with a different set of experiences and, later, reflections. Goossen tells us that these women were, like their sisters in the military industries, developing the self assurance and skills that would later carry them into the workplace (p. 92). On the other hand, the Conscientious Objector women also honed and deepened their pacifist beliefs in the communities of the camps, and many went on to foreign service and peacework after the war (pp. 126-127).

Goossen's book illuminates the experiences of CPS women as they negotiated the difficulties of opposition to the "good war" and stretched conventional gender roles to effect daily survival within a gender-stratified community that readily valorized the men's sacrifices as COs, but slighted the women's contributions both in the moment and for the record (p. 119). The book presents a rich narrative of previously absent accounts of women's conscientious objector experience. In this respect it is a critical contribution to the literatures on women and the military and women's work for peace. These women would otherwise be invisible. This history presents women as pacifists via their religious conviction rather than as per their gender: "Their actions were infused with ideals of humanitarian service that heralded principles of religious freedom but de-emphasized gender" (p. 130). In doing so, it presents information that enriches our understandings of the relationships between gender and militarism. It presents a legacy of the strength of the peace churches in cohering cross-gender support for war resistance.

Having said that, the book raised many more questions for me than it answered. First of all, while the book eventually, by chapter three, delved with more verve into descriptions of women's histories in and around the camps and stayed focused for the remainder of the book, I found myself wondering several things about the women, even by the end. Goossen does not talk in any extended way about the kinds of connections that the women made among themselves for support within the camp communities, with the exception of the "round robin" letter writing that several of the women engaged in after the dismantling of the CPS. I wondered what kinds of thinking happened amongst the women, what kinds of analyses they shared about women's roles in the camps, about the particular place of women in pacifist work, about women pacifists in the larger society who precisely articulated their gender and pacifism, and about views of women's work in the broader society? For the most part women's stories in Goossen's account are referenced to their own personal coming into service and in relation to the men around them.

More broadly, what were the ethnic and racial demographics of the CPS participants (male and female)? A reference is made to one black CO in an AFSC camp and a challenge to Jim Crow segregation at a high school dance in Orlando, Florida (pp. 40-41). One reference is also made to sending gifts and advocating for Japanese-American internees and to George Yamada's transfer from the CO Camp in California to the internment camps (p. 40). These go by without any analysis of what meaning there was in civil rights activism for the CPS women, or men. Goossen mentions several times that CPS women were also involved with civil rights work, but details very little of it. There is documentation of a number of demonstrations inside CO camps of African American and European American COs fighting for integration of the camps' mess halls and barracks.[3] What was the relationship of CPS women to these events? How did they respond to these issues? These events and the CPS women's relationship to them would have helped to enrich the story of the CPS women's activism. An addendum to this issue is that, likewise, very little is said to contextualize the class component of this story. In one place Goossen discusses the resentment displayed by non-CPS mental hospital workers toward the CPS women mental hospital workers because of the CPS women's educational backgrounds and potential career choices (p. 110). Were the COs who chose to be in the CPS likewise of a more privileged class location than their brethren who were in the prisons? How would this have affected their self and community understandings?

Overall, I think this book makes some important contributions to the literature on conscientious objectors, on women and peace activism, and to the general histories of the home front during World War II. It raises some important perspectives on gender and peace work, helping to dispel the myths of uniformity both about support for the war and about women's motivations to peace activism. Where the book falters is in its attempts to analyze the meaning of these women's experiences in a larger context. Although Goossen mentions a number of scholars of gender and peace activism (pp. 45-46), she stops short of connecting their important analyses to her rich narrative, and it is here that scholars of gender and peace activism will find a site for further work.

Notes

[1]. For example, see Carol Barkalow, *In the Men's House* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1990); Olga Gruhitz-Hoyt, *They Also Served: American Women in World War II* (Secaucus, N.J.: Carol Publishing Group, 1995); Major General Jeanne Holm, *Women in the Military: the Unfinished Revolution* (Novato: Presidio Press, 1982); C. Kay Larson, *'Til I Come Marching Home: A Brief History of Women in World War II* (Pasadena, Md.: Minerva Center, 1995); Betty J. Morden, *The Women's Army Corps: 1948-1978* (Wash, D.C.: U.S.G.P.O., 1990); Helen Rogan *Mixed Company: Women in the Modern Army* (New York: GP Putnam's Sons, 1981).

[2]. For example, Sherna Berger Gluck, *Rosie the Riveter Revisited: Women, the War, and Social Change* (Boston, Mass.: G.K. Hall, 1987); Maureen Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1984); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Routledge Press, 1989); Nancy B. Wise and Christy Wise, *A Mouthful of Rivets: Women and Work in World War II* (San Francisco: Jossey Bass, 1994).

[3]. See Roy Keppler papers, Resource Center for Nonviolence, Santa Cruz, Calif.

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