

Amy J. Shaw, *Crisis of Confidence: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the Great War* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2009).

Amy J. Shaw has offered an interesting examination of a generally neglected component of Canadian Great War experience in *Crisis of Confidence: Conscientious Objection in Canada during the Great War*. She argues that war seemingly provided a lasting social unity, but this was fragmented by the French/English divide which dominates the literature. Other issues, such as conscientious objectors (COs) have been generally unexamined. This is especially true in the case of objectors as they “made up a relatively small aspect of the contemporary discourse on the First World War and is not part of our collective memory of the conflict.” (9) Such a statement however does not imply the topic is minor or unimportant as it addresses multiple issues of wider historical relevance.

With a primary focus on the *Military Service Act*, Shaw’s work is an interesting inquiry into several wider fields including government-society relations, religious freedom and identity, masculine behaviour, social perceptions of objectors, and obligations in a democratic society. Her main focus is on the differing stances of religious groups and how each reacted to the war. Interestingly, while certain groups such as Mennonites generally maintained ‘blanket’ exemptions while individuals from other denominations (or sects) were required to prove not only their affiliation to a series of tribunals, but also their personal objection to military service. Conscientious objectors generally framed their opposition in a Christian or biblical narrative, as did members of the tribunals who adjudicated their claims. As Shaw points out, religious opposition was the only acceptable grounds for exemption – secular pacifist’s claims were not recognized (4). Overall, exemption was based on prior promises and not individual freedoms.

Shaw continues on to examine how what was initially a primarily religious phenomenon became increasingly political as the war continued, addressing differences between the Canadian and British experience, and also how factors such as class impacted contentious objector status. In Britain, many elites objected to the war, but “conscience was easier to recognize, and appease, in prominent persons.” (8) Even the definition of objectors is problematic as there is a difference between conscientious and political objection (16). Though the book lacks a systematic examination of class issues it is clear from the number of individual examples provided throughout that class was important to objection – it was not however the primary identity of many objectors and was subordinated to religious or general political rationales. It would be interesting however for future works to take up the issue of class and objection in greater detail.

This work is especially important for the emerging field of peace histo-

ry, and fills a sizeable gap in the literature. Little work on Great War COs has been done in comparison with Second World War objectors, while works on reactions from labour groups or religious orders only mentions objectors in passing. In addition, these works do not attempt to view the objector's own views comparatively or draw wider observations of the issue. Though important works on Canadian pacifism such as Thomas Socknat's *Witness Against War: Pacifism in Canada, 1900-1945* (1987) provide a useful overview there is much ground left to cover. Additionally, while many theoretical or sociological works on pacifism shed light on the issue, they lack a historical view to "place their objection in its appropriate context" as "it is important to examine what elements in Canadian society affected the decision to object, the experience of objection and how mainstream society viewed the COs." (6)

While the lack of a thorough use of documentary sources is often crippling to a work, Shaw points out that the majority of the COs records were destroyed by Chief Justice Lyman P. Duff shortly after the war. This forced the author to rely on newspaper accounts which were often sensationalistic or provided only rudimentary information. These setbacks notwithstanding, Shaw has painstakingly attempted to reconstruct as complete a list as possible based on sources ranging from newspaper accounts to military attestation papers and leaves the reader with a sound analysis.

Shaw's *Crisis of Confidence* is an interesting and valuable first look at a hitherto neglected component of the Canadian Great War experience and will prove useful to both general readers and specialists seeking new examinations and approaches for many issues pertaining to the first two decades of the twentieth century.

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**Bruce Baum and Duchess Harris, eds. *Racially Writing the Republic: Racists, Race Rebels, and Transformations of American Identity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).**

This fine collection of essays seeks to write race back into our historical and political narratives of the United States. By collecting a variety of essays from multiple disciplines, the editors revisit the role of race and racism in the development of American political thought and national identity. Essays on canonical American thinkers and political actors such as Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, and Abraham Lincoln make clear the ways in which America's founding ideals of liberty and democracy were informed by a racially defined vision. The book, therefore, commits itself to "exposing the false neutrality of a racially white America that their [the canonical thinkers'] theories presume and to