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# Southern Jewish History

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For authors' guidelines, queries, and all editorial matters, write to the Editor, *Southern Jewish History*, 2517 Hartford Dr., Ellenwood, GA 30294; e-mail: Markkbauman@aol.com. For journal subscriptions and advertising, write Rachel Heimovics Braun, managing editor, 954 Stonewood Lane, Maitland, FL 32751; or e-mail: journal@jewishsouth.org; or visit [www.jewishsouth.org](http://www.jewishsouth.org). For membership and general information about the Southern Jewish Historical Society, write to PO Box 71601, Marietta, GA 30007-1601 or visit [www.jewishsouth.org](http://www.jewishsouth.org)

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## Book Reviews

**The Fish That Ate the Whale: The Life and Times of America's Banana King.** By Rich Cohen. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2012. 270 pages.

The Marxist insistence upon the intimate entanglement of capitalist enterprise and state power has no better validation than the history of the United Fruit Company. At the peak of its power in the first half of the twentieth century, the fate of most of the Central American isthmus was determined by the relentless quest for profit that drove this corporate giant. So subjugated was the civic life of Honduras, Guatemala, and El Salvador, in particular, to *El Pulpo* (the octopus) that such countries became known as "banana republics" – a phrase coined by O. Henry in 1904. *El Pulpo* became the world's biggest grower, shipper, and seller of a product that has exceeded even apples in popularity, and that worldwide has ranked below only such staples as rice, wheat, and milk. The company once amassed so much wealth that the management of United Fruit seemed absurdly easy. One prospective CEO could foresee no special challenge in running the company. "What's the big deal?" he asked. "So you have dinner once a year with the president of Honduras," a remark so striking and revealing that its absence from Rich Cohen's book is surprising. For he has produced a colorful and absorbing biography of the last major figure in the history of United Fruit, Samuel Zemurray (1877–1961.) Not only that, Cohen has also tracked down a few very aged survivors linked to the career of "Sam the Banana Man." That means that *The Fish That Ate the Whale* will not be surpassed as the most comprehensive account of the only southern Jewish businessman who was powerful enough to have violated the sovereignty of entire nations.

The most notorious example of the latter occurred in the early 1950s. Guatemala's democratically elected president, Jacobo

Arbenz, wanted to take over some of United Fruit's unused land to give to impoverished peasants. He sought to compensate the company with bonds rather than in cash, and then assessed the property according to the wildly undervalued rate on the basis of which the company had paid its preposterously low taxes. *El Pulpo* cried foul. In 1954 the Department of State and the Central Intelligence Agency joined forces to overthrow the Arbenz government, charging it—without credible evidence—with introducing Communism into the Western Hemisphere. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles had been a lawyer for United Fruit; his brother, Allen Dulles, directed the CIA. A decade earlier Zemurray had already hired the savviest public relations counselor of the century, Edward L. Bernays, to work for United Fruit. Bernays was assigned the task of organizing a propaganda campaign to undermine a legitimate government, which American military power replaced with a lethal right-wing dictatorship. Never in the history of American foreign policy had the influence of a single company been displayed more nakedly.

In Guatemala City, among those observing the outbreak of the U.S.-instigated coup to crush a legitimate government, was a young Argentine physician named Ernesto "Che" Guevara. What he saw drove him towards Communism, and towards Cuba, where he joined the charismatic son of a farmer who had leased land from the ubiquitous United Fruit. The startling triumph of Fidel Castro in 1959 activated the CIA effort to overthrow his regime two years later at the Bay of Pigs. The landing there was partly facilitated by two ships on loan from United Fruit. (By then Zemurray had sold all his stock in the company.) The spectacular failure of that invasion, plus Castro's tenacious survival for nearly six more decades, marked the decline of *El Pulpo*, which became United Brands and then Chiquita Brands International. But whatever it is called, its legacy consists of a willingness to live by the laws of the jungle.

Having arrived in Alabama as a penniless, fatherless teenager from Bessarabia, Zemurray did not write the merciless laws of competitive capitalism, it is necessary to note in exculpation. He had little choice except to live by them; but his own personal

signature consisted of a fierce determination, a faith in his own judgment, an implacable optimism, and a remorseless grasp of every aspect of the business in which he made his fortune. He had begun by peddling otherwise discarded bananas until he reached the docks of New Orleans (around 1905, Cohen estimates); by 1929 Zemurray had made a company called Cuyamel so efficient that United Fruit bought him out and made him its majority stockholder. (That incorporation of Cuyamel gives this book its title.) Three years later he was running United Fruit. Though its headquarters were located in Boston, Zemurray clung to his New Orleans roots by keeping his home there. The Boston neighborhood that he was rich enough to buy a house in kept him out, it seems, because he was a Jew.

"Here was a man who lived every aspect of the Jewish experience in America," Cohen concludes. "He came with the great influx from Eastern Europe, prospered with his times, was devastated by the [Second World] War. He married a Jewish woman, belonged to a synagogue, said Kaddish for his dead." Zemurray was also "a Zionist. Israel was important to him, and he was important to Israel. And yet he did not teach his children or grandchildren to be Jewish" (221–222). *The Fish That Ate the Whale* thus captures the pathos and poignancy, as well as the arc of achievement, of a life that the author has exposed with imaginative flair. Cohen gets closer than any reader might have reason to expect to a subject who operated his business enterprises by stealth, who spoke with brevity and concision, and who only very rarely wrote letters. The paper trail that Zemurray left behind is frustratingly elusive. Having done some research on his legacy, this reviewer can only express awe at the ingenuity and assiduousness of Cohen's research. The cutthroat aura of the banana business did not attract men of meditative and self-reflective habits, and therefore huge chunks of Zemurray's activities and attitudes are bound to be forever obscure.

One particular challenge is the character of his marriage to Sarah Weinberger. She was born in Galveston, the daughter of Jacob ("Jake the Parrot King") Weinberger, who was a rival in the banana trade. The couple lived in New Orleans on 2 Audubon

Place (which would become the residence of the president of Tulane University). But because Zemurray spent so much of his time in Central America (especially Honduras), he and Sarah lived apart as much as they were together. What bound them to one another? Who knows? The gringo who perpetuated the exploitative labor practices of *El Pulpo* was also—quite paradoxically—a progressive who admired the New Deal and backed a leftist weekly like *The Nation*. How were Zemurray's political attitudes formed? Cohen can offer no clues. But he has made a fascinating contribution to business history, to the history of hemispheric relations—and to southern Jewish history as well.

*Stephen J. Whitfield*, Brandeis University, Waltham, Massachusetts  
This reviewer may be contacted at [swhitfie@brandeis.edu](mailto:swhitfie@brandeis.edu)

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**Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition.** By Marni Davis. New York: New York University Press, 2012. 262 pages.

In *Jews and Booze*, historian Marni Davis interweaves several powerful American stories that unfolded from 1850 to 1933: the historical relationship between Jews and various aspects of the liquor trade; the impact of those ties on the complex Jewish goals of acculturating to American society while maintaining religious and ethnic distinctiveness; and the challenges to Jewish unity and standing in the United States posed by the popular anti-liquor movement that culminated in national Prohibition during the 1920s. Davis has conducted thorough research in manuscript census materials, business records, personal and associational papers, newspapers, and trade publications, and mastered the rich secondary literature in Jewish, alcohol, and temperance history. She also achieves admirable balance in her analysis, puncturing anti-Jewish stereotypes concerning liquor-selling and wet advocacy, but also carefully documenting the actual conditions that underlay exaggeration and myth-making. As a scholarly study, *Jews and Booze* significantly contributes to the history of American Jewish

life and establishes itself as the definitive study of Jews and the American Prohibition movement.

For mid-nineteenth-century Jewish entrepreneurs, liquor commerce provided an agreeable path to business success and Americanization while retaining ties to European Jewish culture. Because alcohol was an element of cherished family-centered religious rituals and since Jews had earned a reputation for moderate drinking, American Jews of central European origin did not share early temperance enthusiasts' perception of alcohol as a destructive force. Moreover, generations of European Jews had been involved in the production and sale of alcoholic beverages, so many immigrants possessed skills suitable for work in the liquor trade. Because of limited American wine production and German domination of brewing, most Jews in the alcohol business concentrated in the whiskey industry, a tendency furthered by opportunities in the many levels of production, distribution, and sales of the whiskey trade. Both in their Jewish and professional associations, Jewish whiskey purveyors through the late nineteenth century emphasized acculturation. Their embrace of American institutions also informed Jewish opposition to the nineteenth-century temperance movement. The overtly Christian identification of temperance groups such as the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, Jewish liquor advocates argued, threatened the secular basis of American democracy that protected all religious traditions. Although temperance advocates regretted Jewish lack of interest in dry reform, they respected the temperate habits of Jews and so largely refrained from stigmatizing Jews. Davis' research in the R. G. Dun & Company credit reports also reveals more favorable assessments of Jews in the alcohol trade than past studies had suggested.

That situation changed as oppression and poverty pushed up to two million Jews out of the eastern European Pale of Settlement to American ports of refuge in the decades spanning the turn of the century. Many Jews had run taverns in the Russian empire and took up similar occupations in America. Moreover, the greater concentration of culturally-insulated Jewish communities produced a new market for kosher wine in the United States,

much of which was produced or distributed by rabbis. As the Prohibition movement mobilized to ban saloons and outlaw alcohol production, attention to "Jew saloons" (114) and Jewish drinking fed a growing American antisemitism. A regional mix of racial repression, Prohibition sentiment, and antisemitism focused special opprobrium on Jewish liquor distributors and saloon owners who sold alcohol to blacks in the early twentieth-century South. Davis is especially good at mapping the perilous situation of Atlanta's Jewish community during the build-up, violent outbreak, and aftermath of the city's vicious 1906 race riot. Acculturated southern Jews endorsed white supremacy, yet were placed on the wrong side of the color divide by the Jewish saloonkeepers who maintained cordial relations with their black customers. National press coverage of the riot lingered on the presence of Jews selling liquor to blacks at the center of the riot zone. Two years later, *Collier's* magazine blamed Cincinnati liquor distributor Lee Levy's suggestively-labeled gin for black sexual assaults on white women. The sting of antisemitism energized the drive for state prohibition in the South. The notorious 1915 lynching of Leo Frank, Davis argues, followed upon a decade of accusations that Jewish liquor sellers endangered white southern women. Spectacular charges were less apparent in the North, but acculturated German Jew Simon Wolf's affiliation with the National German-American Alliance damaged his reputation and the wet cause alike in the anti-German atmosphere of World War I, advancing the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment and the adoption of national Prohibition.

Defiance, embarrassment, and factionalism marked the Jewish response to the Prohibition regime. Although a handful of prominent Jews, most of them assimilated Americans from "a German cultural milieu" (169) like Reform Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, endorsed Prohibition, the great majority of American Jews opposed Prohibition as intrusive and undemocratic. To the consternation of assimilationists who counseled fellow Jews to respect the law, residents of some Jewish enclaves behaved as if the law did not apply to them, other individuals were active as bootleggers, and a few gained notoriety as gangsters profiting off

the illegal alcohol trade. Yet the source of the most vigorous criticism of Jews, and of division within American Jewry, was section six of the Volstead Act, which allowed for the production, sale, and distribution of wine for sacramental purposes. Unlike the practice in Catholic and Lutheran churches, Jewish sacramental wine was for home use and required distribution to individual families. This weakness in the law was exploited by bootleggers and produced dismaying public scandals that divided the Jewish community. Determined to protect the American status of their coreligionists, some Reform Jews, led by the Central Conference of American Rabbis, urged Jews to substitute grape juice for fermented wine and even lobbied the commissioner of Internal Revenue, who supervised Prohibition regulations, to revoke the sacramental exemption. Traditional Jews, led by the Orthodox rabbinate, angrily rejected the proposal, joined by outraged Catholics and Lutherans. Jews had to await Repeal in 1933 to escape the dilemma Prohibition represented to their shared loyalties to America and to their identity as Jews. Thanks to Davis, this critical passage in Jewish and American history will no longer be neglected.

*Thomas R. Pegram, Loyola University Maryland, Baltimore*

This reviewer may be contacted at [Tpegram@loyola.edu](mailto:Tpegram@loyola.edu)

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**The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalheimer and a Rescue from Nazi Germany.** By Robert H. Gillette. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011. 206 pages.

From Robert H. Gillette's opening vignette, *The Virginia Plan: William B. Thalheimer and a Rescue from Nazi Germany* provides a vivid description about a singular story of Jewish emigration from Nazi Germany to the United States immediately before the Second World War. At the center of Gillette's account are German Jewish students of agricultural science and their headmaster, Curt Bondy, and a Jewish

businessman in Virginia, William B. Thalhimer. Using a cross-cutting approach, Gillette earnestly juxtaposes the students' bleak future in the Third Reich with Thalhimer's headstrong goal of relocating the young men and women to the Hyde Farmland, in the Virginia countryside. By eliciting Jewish camaraderie and a sense of community without a long-standing sense of establishment or settlement, *The Virginia Plan* provides admirable input toward better understanding international Jewish relations and the intricate nature of immigration immediately before and during the Second World War.

At the core of *The Virginia Plan* is a story divided into three open-ended sections that follow the students from a vulnerable and dormant period in Germany, eventual arrival in the United States, and right through the farm's unforeseen closing to the lasting effects of their experiences. Each of these sections encompasses notions of endurance, sacrifice, and solidarity. By connecting the three ideals with separate settings and the senses they induce, Gillette guides readers through the winding excursion Gross Breesen students and their headmaster endured to make it to the Hyde Farmland.

Revolving around the students' anxieties regarding personal security and sense of affinity, and the international Jewish community's overall goal to protect the "future of Jewish adolescents," Gillette captures the three previously cited notions throughout the book (17-18). In the first informal section of the book, which includes these anxieties, Thalhimer's initial push to obtain visas for the students, and their eventual sentencing to the Buchenwald concentration camp, endurance is elicited (65-67). Three weeks after their imprisonment, the students are released. Their absence from Gross Breesen is connected to declining food production and pending immigration to the United States (72). Upon gaining their freedom, the students face an uncertain future in the United States. It is in this portion of *The Virginia Plan* that Gillette presents the students' serious emotional difficulties and their preparation for an ultimate or alternative sacrifice. Finally, solidarity is revealed once Gillette's focus shifts to the students' time at the Hyde

Farmland. Solidarity is further bolstered with the realization that their stay there is short-lived.

Complementing the coverage of the students' and their headmaster's complicated journey from Nazi Germany to the United States is Gillette's injection of happenings directly preceding and during the Second World War. He guides readers through an interchanging narrative of the farm's progressions and eventual non-economic successes, as well as the deteriorating atmosphere in Nazi Germany and, eventually, all of Europe in the late 1930s and early 1940s. By utilizing articles from the *Richmond News Leader* and *Richmond Times-Dispatch*, which describe the escalation of the war in Europe, Gillette showcases his "here and there" narrative and the students' reactions to Nazi Germany's hostility.

This piece of historical scholarship unearths an ignored episode in the history of German Jews who found refuge in the American South immediately before and during the Second World War. This story of the Virginia Plan, revolving around the students and Bondy, Thalhimier, and a revolving door of diplomats, presents a pathbreaking account of cross-continental ties within the international Jewish community. The author thus skillfully explores the participation of formerly oppressed people in a segregated society.

Gillette's treatment of the story of Jewish refugees' insertion into the Jim Crow South during the Second World War is fresh. But one glaring flaw hinders his narrative. While he habitually notes neighbors' and nearby townspeople's mostly favorable response to the industrious students, Gillette does not connect their participation in a traditional style of farming and the locals' acceptance of them. Instead he links Thalhimier's vision for the Hyde Farmland, which he and other supporters hoped to be self-sufficient, as the driving force behind the locals' hospitality toward the students. By simply acknowledging the agricultural changes occurring in the South through the Great Depression and Second World War, spurred by the replacement of workforces with machinery (because large landowners could manipulate New Deal agricultural legislation),

Gillette could have underscored the astonishing nature of acceptance of young German Jews in what he deems “Jim Crow Country” (21).

By utilizing archives and collections near the Hyde Farmland, like the Thalhimer Family Archives and Messersmith Papers, *The Virginia Plan* is rooted in many primary sources. Gillette’s notes and list of sources in the back of his book are helpful, as is his description of the significance of those sources. Pertinent information about Bondy’s post-Hyde Farmland newsletter, and the *Circular Letters*, is also provided (197).

Gillette’s *The Virginia Plan* is an engaging book that provides substantial insight into the ways influential Jewish Americans sought to rescue German Jews from maltreatment and certain death and how they used such arrangements to stimulate similar acts of goodwill. Whereas books like Mark Wyman’s *DPs: Europe’s Displaced Persons, 1945–1951*, and Mark M. Anderson’s *Hitler’s Exiles: Personal Stories of the Flight from Nazi Germany to America* broadly trace the flight of established and well-known Jews from the region, Gillette focuses on the emigration of a young, intellectually promising demographic of Jews fleeing the Third Reich. The most enduring and appealing aspect of this book is its author’s claim to broaden the historiography of Jewish immigration just prior to and during the Second World War within a narrative that should engage scholars as well as lay readers.

*Michael Murphy*, Mississippi State University, Starkville

This reviewer may be contacted at [mtm227@msstate.edu](mailto:mtm227@msstate.edu)

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**The Whole Damn Deal: Robert Strauss and the Art of Politics.**

By Kathryn J. McGarr. New York: Public Affairs, 2011. 443 pages.

The meeting was at an impasse. The year was 1980. The League of Women Voters, which organized presidential debates, was ready to adjourn another unproductive session with representatives of incumbent Jimmy Carter and GOP rival Ronald Reagan.

Reagan's liaison, James Baker III, left the room for the men's lavatory. Forty-five seconds later, Carter's henchman, Robert Strauss, excused himself. Fifteen minutes later the pair returned with a twelve-point agreement scribbled on the back of a campaign envelope.

The urinal conference was vintage Bob Strauss—a deal brokered out of the limelight, one-on-one, with a wink and a hint of sexism. This was not the first time that personal relationships bridged party, ideological, and procedural differences where Strauss, a Texas power broker, was concerned.

The men's room meeting also illustrates the underlying theme of this biography, *The Whole Damn Deal: Robert Strauss and the Art of Politics*. Strauss, who in his political heyday from 1960 to 1992, took charge of the Democratic National Committee when it was mired in debt, resuscitated trade talks with Japan, and served as George H. W. Bush's ambassador to Moscow, is a folksy negotiator who used charm, wit, and insights into human nature to move the wheels of politics on a national and international scale. Personal relationships were his forte—whether facing Mikhail Gorbachev on the back of a flatbed truck or recommending his rabbi for a seat on the Board of Regents of the University of Texas. Whenever possible, this lawyer evaded sunshine laws. In the decades before red-state/blue-state divisions, Strauss crossed the aisle. He thrived on bringing together disparate people—whether that involved putting George Wallace and Ted Kennedy on the same stage in 1973 or getting Carter and Reagan to a televised debate in 1980.

One caveat for readers of this entertaining biography should be recorded: The author is Strauss's grandniece. An alumna of Stanford University, Kathryn McGarr wrote the first draft of this book while a graduate student at the Columbia School of Journalism. Some years earlier, her great-uncle, who will turn ninety-four in October, had hired a seasoned journalist to assist with his memoirs. He recorded more than seventy interviews before the partnership dissolved. McGarr utilized those interviews along with FBI records, congressional hearing transcripts, Democratic Party memos, State Department telegrams, additional personal

interviews, and research at four presidential libraries to produce a discerning political biography with forty-nine pages of endnotes.

The author apparently overlooked the 2004 anthology *Jews in American Politics* in which Gerald Pomper and Miles Pomper call Strauss “the epitome of the modern ‘court Jew,’” because of his fundraising acumen and his proximity to the Oval Office.\* McGarr’s analysis of and Strauss’s reaction to that description would have been instructive.

Organized chronologically, with colloquial chapter titles (“A Dog That’ll Hunt,” “A Bunch of Goddamn Fools”), *The Whole Damn Deal* examines not only Strauss’s deftness as Jimmy Carter’s “Mr. Fix-It,” but also his conflicts of interest involving oil, gas, and savings and loans. Among the eye-opening chapters is “Revolving Door,” which details how the Strauss law firm of Akin, Gump became the first on Capitol Hill to develop a lobbying arm, setting a dubious example that is now ubiquitous.

Strauss’s status as a political insider had its downside. He endured some tense months in 1975 while under criminal investigation for accepting rolls of currency for the Democratic National Committee. “[In] those days you handled a lot of cash,” he acknowledged (153). Rather than record exact amounts, Strauss wrote donors thanking them for “tangible evidence of your support.” Unlike his mentor, Texas Governor John Connally, Strauss escaped indictment because an amendment to the 1974 Campaign Spending Act reduced the statute of limitations on such violations from five years to three.

In 1979, Strauss had a disappointing stint as Carter’s envoy to the Middle East. Initially, he fretted that Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin would “resent” him because he lacked a “formal” Jewish education (253–254). Yet Begin bonded with Strauss, as did Egypt’s Prime Minister Anwar Sadat. Ironically, it was Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Sr., and National Security Advisor

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\* Gerald M. Pomper and Miles A. Pomper, “Movers, Shakers, and Leaders: Jewish Party Politicians,” in *Jews in American Politics*, ed. Sandy Maisel and Ira N. Forman (Lanham, MD, 2004), 96.

Zbigniew Brzezinski with whom Strauss found himself at war. Their diplomacy was more bureaucratic than his personal brand.

Although Bob Strauss, who was born in 1918, is the great-grandson of Texas' first ordained rabbi, he had next to no Jewish education. His German-born father, Karl "Charlie" Strauss, and his uncle Louis Rosenwasser were the only Jewish merchants in Stamford, a West Texas town of about four thousand souls. The two families attended High Holy Day services one day a year at the Reform synagogue in Fort Worth, 145 miles away. Strauss's mother, Edith, hired a Hebrew tutor from Wichita Falls, 115 miles distant, to teach the Alef Bet to Bob and his younger brother, Ted. But the teacher quit thirty minutes into the first lesson, saying it was hopeless. The boys did learn from their mother that they were among the Chosen People, an insight Bob kept to himself lest his Baptist friends become jealous. So popular was the youthful Bob Strauss that the "only door closed" (8) to him in his hometown was presidency of the Baptist Young People's Union, of which he was a social member.

When Strauss enrolled in 1935 at the University of Texas in Austin, he found another door blocked. He could pledge only a Jewish fraternity. "That was a very difficult, traumatic experience for me," he recalled. "I . . . wasn't prepared for the segregated society that I found at the University of Texas where basically Jewish people lived with Jewish people" (14). However, once he joined the Jewish fraternity Sigma Alpha Mu, the Greek system provided an avenue to larger campus life. He became secretary-treasurer of the Inter-Fraternity Council and an extraordinary ticket seller for college events, foreshadowing his fundraising in years to come. Fellow students recall him as "the most popular Jewish boy" at UT (18).

It was on a blind date, but not with each other, that he met Helen Jacobs, daughter of a Dallas paper company executive. He phoned her the next day, and their relationship endured until her death in 2004. The couple wed in 1941, just before his graduation from law school in Austin. Helen was by his side during his four years as an FBI agent and in 1945, when he launched his law firm with former FBI colleague Richard Gump, a Catholic. She

accompanied Bob throughout his career, from the tumultuous Democratic Party convention in Chicago in 1972 to Washington, D.C., where he once directed her to attend LaBelle Lance's Christian Bible study group as a show of support when Budget Director Bert Lance was under investigation. In 1991, Helen moved with Bob to Moscow, where the ambassador's residence "looked like a cross between a pigsty and a West Texas whorehouse" (331). The Strausses ordered dill pickles and deli meats to be sent from abroad and raised morale by throwing picnics for the embassy staff.

Again, the personal touch strengthened Strauss's hand with bureaucrats and diplomats. The fact that he was a Democrat serving a Republican president enhanced his aura. It was a different time, a bygone, bipartisan era that McGarr effectively reconstructs. Her sketch of Strauss's political career lays out the facts so that future historians can integrate and analyze his role on the political stage.

*Hollace Ava Weiner*, Fort Worth Jewish Archives. Fort Worth, TX  
This reviewer may be contacted at [hollaceava@gmail.com](mailto:hollaceava@gmail.com)

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**Southern Civil Religions: Imagining the Good Society in the Post-Reconstruction South.** By Arthur Remillard. Athens, GA, and London: University of Georgia Press, 2011. 234 pages.

Although their numbers were small, Jews were no strangers to the New South. Rabbis, synagogues, and denominational institutions were scattered throughout the region. A chapter of the National Council of Jewish Women was established in Mobile in 1896; and Greenville, Mississippi, was home to a Young Men's Hebrew Benevolent Society. Rabbi Edward Browne began the *Jewish South* in Atlanta in 1878. Reform Jew Charles Jacobson shared a law office with Jeff Davis, the "Wild Ass of the Ozarks" and an Arkansas governor. Jacobson's Judaism did not prevent him from winning a seat in the Arkansas State Senate in 1910. Such exam-

ples of Jewish assimilation in the New South, this book argues, can be explained by their participation in a common discourse of civil religion. According to author Arthur Remillard, "they shared a commitment to philanthropic work, civic involvement, military service, and Democratic Party politics" (107).

Jews are just one of the religious groups discussed in this interesting and well-documented study of religious pluralism, public discourse, and cultural conflict in the Wiregrass region of Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. Remillard carefully uses civil religion as an interpretive tool to recover competing moral visions of the good society. Eschewing mainstream Protestants like southern Baptists and Methodists, Remillard focuses on those at the margins of New South society. A chapter on African Americans includes a discussion of "Before Day clubs," constructions of anxious white southerners that recounted stories of gatherings of black militants who plotted the murders of whites.

Women also gained entrance to New South religion through a gendered ideology that assigned women to a moral sphere. Protestant, Catholic, and Jewish women drew upon a cultural metaphor of Christian motherhood to enter the public arena and engage in reforms like Prohibition and foreign missions. The life of Leon Schwarz illustrates the Jewish variation of civil religion. A veteran of the Spanish-American War, a participant in Confederate Memorial Days, and a member of B'nai B'rith, Schwarz exemplified the military, sectional, and philanthropic loyalties of the New South image. Senator Charles W. Jones of Florida and Mother Austin Carroll of the Sisters of Mercy in Mobile and New Orleans were prominent Catholics who adopted southern civil religion.

Remillard, however, is careful to show that the multiculturalism of civil religion did not preclude bigotry and violence. Lynching, which peaked in Florida during the period under study here, became part of a civil religious discourse that bestowed a redemptive quality on racial violence. Nativism was highly prevalent as well, kept alive by groups like the Guardians of Liberty and the venomous pen of Tom Watson. In the early twentieth century, Sidney J. Catts ran successfully for governor of Florida on an

anti-Catholic platform. James E. Coyle, a Catholic priest of Birmingham, was murdered by a Methodist minister in 1921. The defendant was acquitted due in no small part to anti-Catholic prejudice.

Still, Remillard argues, African Americans, Jews, and Catholics used their vision of a good society to attack religious discrimination. In current academic jargon, these groups subverted a dominant discourse to challenge the hegemonic order of the Protestant, Democratic Bourbon South. African Americans “produced their own civil religious discourse, one marked not only by resistance but also by an understanding of freedom developed from black history and Christian theology” (61). Leon Schwarz claimed that antisemitism was “profoundly un-American” (130).

In telling his story of southern civil religion, Remillard relies heavily on the works of other historians. His account of the hostility that greeted northern Republicans in the Reconstruction South, the unrealistic hopes placed upon public schools and railroads, and the role of women in cultivating the myth of the “Lost Cause” will be familiar to students of southern history. Yet the author has made very good use of contemporary newspapers as well as manuscript letters and diaries, enabling him to present interesting stories that reflect an adept use of quotations.

By stressing division, diversity, and fluidity, Remillard’s portrait of southern civil religion reflects the characteristics of academic postmodernism. At the outset, the author claims that his subject is “the diverse and competing ideal visions of society existing in the post-Reconstruction South” (1). At another point, he characterizes the nature of southern civil religion as “chaotic and unfinished” (10). In this way, Remillard’s depiction of southern civil religion is more closely attuned to the New South described by Edward L. Ayers in *The Promise of the New South* (1992) than that of C. Vann Woodward’s *Origins of the New South* (1951).

Historians, however, might take issue with several points in a book written from the disciplinary perspective of religious studies. First, the choice of the Wiregrass Gulf as the geographical scope of the book needed to be further explained and justified. Does it indeed offer “a suitable cross-section of the American

South" (7), as Remillard claims? Historians of the American South, more familiar with areas like the cotton country of the Mississippi Delta, the low country of South Carolina and Georgia, Piedmont areas of the upcountry, and the Upper South, might wonder. The book even lacks a map to graphically illustrate the region.

Secondly, the nature of religious conflict merited more discussion. In what ways was it cultural, political, or class conflict? Third, historians will suspect that civil religion in the New South served as an ideology for the interests of particular groups or classes. Here Remillard might have well engaged the concept of hegemony that has a rich tradition in southern history. Finally, one wonders if the author has focused too much on the margins of the southern religious landscape at the expense of the mainstream. Although Remillard is careful to acknowledge the dominant forces in the Protestant Democratic South, the book might leave an inflated impression of the role and power of African Americans, women, Jews, and Catholics.

*Mitchell Snay*, Denison University, Granville, Ohio  
This reviewer may be contacted at [snay@denison.edu](mailto:snay@denison.edu)