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Book Reviews

Carolina Israelite: How Harry Golden Made Us Care about Jews, the South, and Civil Rights. By Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015. 359 pages.

Four-year-old Chaim Goldhirsch immigrated with his family to the United States from Galicia (now Ukraine) in 1907 and became the best-known Jew in the South by the late 1950s. Chaim Goldhirsch became Hyman Goldhirsch, then Herschel Goldhirsch, then Harry Goldhirsch, then Harry L. Goldhurst, until – almost certainly trying to hide disgraceful episodes in his past – he finally settled on Harry L. Golden.

As Golden, he was the smart, well-read, witty, and charming newspaper editor whose Charlotte-based *Carolina Israelite* grew to reach 55,000 subscribers. Its liberal views and humorous takes on civil rights pricked, provoked, and sometimes shamed his adopted South, including its Jews. His two dozen books and scores of columns, reviews, and magazine articles made him popular on college campuses, on national television, in the White House, and in civil rights and journalism circles. Golden's writings and speeches reaped him a great deal of money, while also turning him into a national symbol of the forged-in-oppression bond that characterized black-Jewish relationships in the 1950s and 1960s.

But Harry Golden, who died at seventy-nine in 1981, was also a self-involved, self-promoting, convicted stock swindler. He was a liar, philanderer, briber, scofflaw, and check kiter. He was frequently a careless writer, self-plagiarist, and expropriator.

By whatever name, this maverick voice remains one of the more fascinating, entertaining, and complicated figures to settle in

and emerge from the South in the twentieth century. Until now, anyone interested in learning more about Golden was limited to newspaper and newsmagazine archives, fleeting moments in political and cultural histories, articles in scholarly journals, and a thesis and dissertation here or there, plus Golden's 1969 autobiography, *The Right Time*.

Alas, as Kimberly Marlowe Hartnett tells us, Golden's version of his life is unreliable, "peppered with inaccuracies of fact" (249). Hartnett, a former newspaper reporter whose mother once worked for Golden, has assumed the formidable task of looking behind the multiple masks and myths of Herschel Goldhirsch to discover the true life of Harry Golden.

Hartnett has taken the examination of Golden deeper than anyone else to date. Still, she might agree that for a biography that seeks to be definitive and whose title makes ambitious promises, she needed about a hundred more pages and more resources to visit more archives and conduct more face-to-face interviews in order to finish incomplete story lines.

Hartnett portrays an ambitious, garrulous, and headstrong man whose father, Lieb, had been, in Golden's word, a "failure" by American standards in the early twentieth century. The father was indifferent to money and the status it conferred. Although his son admired him for such integrity, Golden wanted more of both in his own life. His mother, Anna, maintained an Orthodox home, lit the Shabbat candles every Friday evening, and constantly uttered Yiddish refrains.

She also raised her children to build American lives, Hartnett tells us, to be adaptable in a Christian-dominated land. Soon Har-

ry was eating ham sandwiches, enjoying Jewishness more than Judaism, absorbing what he liked most about the Jewish experiences – the stories – and becoming known, like his father, for what Hartnett adeptly describes as his “joyful contrariness” (13).

In New York, he pursued and married a Catholic woman, Genevieve (“Tiny”) Gallagher, and agreed to raise their four sons in her faith. Golden tested the marriage many times and in many ways, and when he headed south in 1941, Tiny stayed in New York and never joined him. Of their marriage she would later write: “It never quite gelled” (97).

Golden arrived in Charlotte at the dawn of a tumultuous and transformative time in the South. Intent on advocating for civil rights and poking fun at white supremacists, Golden gave the *Carolina Israelite* a test run in 1942, then in 1944 began publishing full-steam. For the next twenty-four years, he contributed just about every word of text. Publication was initially erratic, but he settled into about six issues a year after 1956. His durability cannot be attributed to enthusiastic support from the Charlotte Jewish community, or from southern Jews more broadly. Main Street’s Jews – for the most part self-conscious, satisfied with their political invisibility, and happy with quiet assimilation – were deeply uncomfortable with Golden or his bold liberalism serving as their totem, Hartnett writes.

Golden’s success as an editor of a small-circulation niche newspaper would have made him merely quirky. But from 1958 to 1960 he jumped into the public eye with three best-selling books – *Only in America*, *For 2 Cents Plain*, and *Enjoy, Enjoy!* – that landed on nightstands and bookshelves of thousands of Jewish households across the United States. Soon he was visiting with Adlai Stevenson, spending weekends with Carl Sandburg and Ralph McGill, meeting with the Kennedy brothers, joining the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., at staged events, and cracking wise on television with Dave Garroway, Jack Paar, and Johnny Carson.

All the while Golden harbored significant secrets, one of which burst into the public domain soon after *Only in America* was published. News organizations received anonymous letters

describing how Golden, then known as Harry Goldhurst, had pleaded guilty in 1929 to mail fraud in connection with two shady stock operations in which he was clearly the driving force. He also had bribed a former girlfriend, who was a lawyer inside the U.S. Attorney's Office, only to realize after being caught that she was playing him. Ultimately he served three years, eight months, and twenty-two days, the normal length of time for the nominal five-year sentence he had been given.

Much of that story has been told before by the late Robert A. Hohner, a scholar of southern history, in the *North Carolina Historical Review* in 1988. Hartnett adds to that narrative the devastating impact that Golden's tawdry behavior (including many paramours) had on his family. Hartnett also describes well how Golden, joined by his publisher and editor at World Publishing, astutely manipulated the news coverage that revealed his past to make it appear that a conscience-stricken celebrity had come forward on his own.

Golden had a second secret that Hartnett reveals, even as she misses an intriguing backstory that can be found in the papers of one of Golden's most determined nemeses, Tom Waring, the segregationist editor of the *Charleston News & Courier*. Golden, as H. L. Goldhurst, had pleaded guilty in a separate mail fraud case in 1943 in Birmingham after getting caught in a check-kiting scheme that stiffed a hotel and a couple of companies. He was put on probation for five years. (Astonishingly, the feds failed to connect this case to his 1929 guilty plea.) A review of Waring's papers would have shown how he, some FBI officials, Jesse Helms (then a North Carolina radio station executive), and assorted other segregationists gathered and quietly distributed the incriminating evidence against Golden. In the end, none of them published the dirt, but they delighted in spreading the gossip from 1960 to 1962 in hopes of eclipsing Golden's rising star.

Waring despised Golden—but not because he was Jewish. Waring's papers at the South Carolina Historical Society reveal a man deeply offended when a South Carolina chapter of the Citizens Councils distributed what he called "crackpot anti-Semitic

literature." But he could not stand the way that Golden made fun and fools of segregationists.

An even more prominent segregationist editor, the gruff James J. Kilpatrick in Richmond, showed deep affection for Golden. Hartnett captures much of that, but she missed this gem in a 1957 letter to Golden, found in Kilpatrick's papers at the University of Virginia: "I have not abandoned hope of converting you to conservatism. In fact, the more I reflect upon these things, the more I am persuaded that one day we shall pass each other, like steamers crossing in mid-ocean, you proceeding steadily toward the right, and I tacking erratically toward the liberal left. Let us grow old together, Harry. Life is awfully short."

That divergence of views about Golden from the segregationist camp shows the unique role Golden played in the transformation of the South, the way his wit and warmth divided and conquered segregationist forces in advancing the cause of civil rights.

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The Harness Maker's Dream: Nathan Kallison and the Rise of South Texas. By Nick Kotz. Fort Worth, TX: TCU Press, 2013. 337 pages.

In the 1890s, the Pale of Settlement was a place of horror for Russian Jews, who were confronted with rampaging pogromists and villainous Cossacks. At the age of seventeen, Nathan Kallison said goodbye to his widowed mother and left the only world he knew to undertake the perilous journey to America. Unlike the stereotypical story of the Russian Jewish immigrants who made their homes either in the crowded Lower East Side or the ghettos of Chicago, Kallison would undertake the unimaginable and settle with his wife, Anna, a fellow immigrant, in San Antonio, Texas. There he used his skill as a harness maker—one of the few occupations open to Jews in the Pale—to eventually develop Kallison's store. It would become "the largest farm and ranch

supply business in the southwest,” and the Kallison Ranch promoted “the latest scientific methods in modern agriculture” (1). Pulitzer Prize winner Nick Kotz brings this unusual story to life and does so in a personal manner: he is the grandson of Nathan Kallison.

The Harness Maker’s Dream is not simply an instance of Texas Jewish history, but it is an immigrant story too. Kallison’s story is both a trans-Atlantic and transnational one. At the beginning of his text, Kotz explores the Russian prejudice that Kallison escaped and the economic hardships Russian Jewish immigrants faced in crowded neighborhoods like Chicago, where Kallison first settled before moving to Texas. His ability to contextualize these environments in time and place enables the reader to see why an immigrant might take the chance to move to San Antonio, which was much more heavily populated with Catholics (many of whom were Mexican American) than with Jews. Their community did not boast of an active Jewish culture, but through their determination and success, Kallison and his descendants were able to integrate their lives into the fabric of San Antonio without losing sight of their Jewish roots and values.

Kotz makes note of the importance of Judaic practice to dispel the notion that this story is merely about assimilation. In Chicago, Kallison had lived where “it seemed as though there were synagogues on every block” (41). The challenges to remaining a practicing Jew were not insurmountable because the culture made Judaism accessible. In San Antonio there were “pealing cathedral bells, joined by those of other churches through the city” (41). Antisemitism existed in Texas,

where it was far milder than in czarist Russia. Nativism was directed at Mexicans as well as newcomers from eastern Europe. Nathan and his wife Anna were “shocked” to discover such a different world and eventually began to “abandon the orthodox rituals” of their upbringing (2). They worshiped at the Reform Temple Beth-El, a German-dominated institution that provided a Jewish environment that helped congregants fit in with the general population. Beth-El united Jewish men through business by not denigrating their relentless work ethic on the Sabbath. Kotz briefly considers the role of San Antonio’s Rabbi Ephraim Frisch, who advocated the teaching of evolution and fought for “civil rights and economic justice for blacks and Mexicans, stood up against anti-Semitism, and took on the Ku Klux Klan” (105). Frisch inspired the Kallison children to become active in the synagogue and within the Jewish as well as non-Jewish communities.

Although the family became absorbed in American life, they did not ignore their Jewish identity. Kotz explores the way that Nathan’s son Perry Kallison wore two hats, one in the Jewish community and the other in San Antonio at large. “In his religious and community leadership roles,” Perry “dropped his folksy ‘Ol’ Trader’ persona, but he remained the same effective advocate for his causes” (197). Living in both worlds enabled him to fight discrimination against African Americans and Mexican Americans, although Kotz does not delve into this activity in great detail. Perry Kallison also became a passionate Zionist who aided the state of Israel by strengthening its agricultural industry.

The Harness Maker’s Dream is not simply about the way in which the Kallisons adapted their faith but also about how they managed to triumph economically. Their success was a product of diligence and an incredible work ethic that Nathan Kallison promoted. His children worked in the store as early as the age of ten. Between 1910 and 1914, the patriarch purchased the large tracts of land that became the Kallison Ranch and built a house there. He left a legacy that spanned five generations. In the second generation, for example, his sons, Perry and Morris, furthered the dream in distinctive ways. Perry created a radio program, *The Ol’ Trader*,

which helped to promote the family business by appealing to South Texas farmers and ranchers who exhibited curiosity about the world. *The Ol' Trader* became the "longest continuous rural radio broadcast in the world" (283). This book fascinatingly shows how Perry transformed himself into something like a preacher complete with a Texan drawl in order to relate to his listeners. His talks resembled "sermonettes," as though delivered by "an editorialist or a rabbi" (181). Both brothers lived comfortably within two worlds. As Kotz puts it, "Both Morris and Perry presented themselves as men filled with bonhomie, ambition, and a confident projection that declared: 'I belong here. I am Texas'" (180).

This book is not exclusively about triumph against the odds. It is also a tragic story that details the loss of the store. The changing economy, which shifted from rural to suburban, the advent of the shopping mall, and the loss of ranches to real estate development caused this flourishing institution in South Texas to vanish, giving way to chain stores like Fed-Mart and later Walmart. Generational disputes over management created a firestorm in the family that could not be quenched. Downtown San Antonio was losing its appeal to shoppers.

Although the store disappeared, Kotz presents photographs of both the business and the family in order to preserve their memory. The Kallisons' story is thus brought to life. As though it were a personal photo album, the family's history as well as the growing Jewish presence in San Antonio are lovingly traced. A detailed chronology also tracks Nathan Kallison and his family placing them within both European and Texas history. A genealogical chart allows the reader to trace all members of the family down to Kotz himself. The evolution of the family thus becomes comprehensible. The author hopes that his book will serve as a model for others to research their past and record their history. By telling the Kallison story over the course of several generations, Kotz illuminates the values that his grandfather instilled: "hard work, solidarity, faith, love of family and country, respect for the land and compassion for their fellow human beings" (253). The Kallisons epitomize the American dream of escaping persecution, finding freedom, and achieving success. *The Harness Maker's*

Dream shows how the ordinary lives of individuals could truly be extraordinary.

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German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie: Making Sense of the Nazi Past during the Civil Rights Era. By Monique Laney. New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015. 320 pages.

Two noteworthy books have recently examined the United States' role in recruiting and employing Nazi scientists. Annie Jacobsen's *Operation Paperclip: The Secret Intelligence Program that Brought Nazi Scientists to America* (2014) and Eric Lichtblau's *The Nazi Next Door: How America Became a Safe Haven for Hitler's Men* (2014) explore how and why thousands of Nazi scientists, intelligence agents, and others deemed of value were saved and protected. The American government ignored or obscured possible and real war crimes by many of these Germans, including the most renowned of the postwar engineers, Wernher von Braun. Jacobsen's and Lichtblau's focus, however, is largely national and international in scope. In contrast, Monique Laney, an assistant professor of history at Auburn University, examines the impact of some of these scientists on Huntsville, Alabama, where they resettled and were employed in the U.S. rocket and space programs. *German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie* adds nuance to the story of these former Nazi scientists by exploring two general themes: how these German "refugees" adapted to their lives in Huntsville; and how their neighbors made sense of their Nazi past in the context of the Jim Crow South.

Huntsville changed profoundly in the postwar period. Because of the growth of federal investment in Redstone Arsenal and the rapid influx of federal personnel from outside the region, Huntsville provided new high-tech opportunities that other southern cities did not enjoy. This rapid modernization, coupled with a significant number of newcomers, fostered new ideas and

an atmosphere that was more open and much less reactionary than Birmingham or Montgomery, the two Alabama cities at the center of the civil rights movement. By comparison, Huntsville had relatively few disturbances during the turbulent 1950s and 1960s, and the city even started desegregating some public facilities before the 1964 Civil Rights Act.

When the first German rocketeers arrived in Huntsville in 1950, the local press presented them to the public as sympathetic figures, even as victims of the Nazis. The politically and socially savvy von Braun in particular was portrayed as very much in the mold of middle-class America, albeit with an expertise that his neighbors lacked. A few white, non-Jewish members of the community – usually veterans or people who had lost family members during the war – harbored animosity, but it largely remained below the surface. The majority of the white non-Jewish community embraced the scientists, especially as the Cold War intensified and as Huntsville's fortunes blossomed with the expansion of Redstone Arsenal and, later, NASA and the Marshall Space Center. Most of the German families residing in Huntsville became part of civic life in the community, and with Huntsville's growing prosperity, locals overwhelmingly embraced the immigrants. Indeed, the Germans made a positive and enduring impression on the community. The city even named its sports and exhibition hall the Von Braun Center.

Yet Huntsville's Jews, especially those who lost family members in the Holocaust, did not welcome the German scientists with open arms. The older generation clearly reacted with caution and even suspicion against the Germans, although

they rarely expressed such feelings openly. Later generations of Jews apparently did not hold these attitudes, but Laney does not say why, nor does she probe further into the Jewish response to the German scientists in Huntsville. Although it may have been more open-minded than some other southern cities, Huntsville was still racially bifurcated and closely governed by the strictures of racism and segregation that severely limited both the contact between blacks and the German families and economic opportunities for African Americans even in the rapidly modernizing community. Because of this, blacks formed few impressions of the German scientists and engineers, who were considered part of the elite white community. The Germans' presence in Huntsville, however, served as an uncomfortable reminder that white newcomers enjoyed more privileges than southern blacks. Conversely, the first generation of German Jewish families accepted Jim Crow and made little or no effort to improve the plight of blacks, thus ignoring the obvious similarities between Jim Crow and Nazi racism.

The scientists' and engineers' Nazi background had been all but forgotten—not only in Huntsville, but also throughout the nation—until 1984, when the Office of Special Investigations (OSI) focused on Arthur Rudolph, the director of Nazi Germany's V-2 rocket program, which had used slave labor at the concentration camp Dora-Mittelbau in central Germany. Rudolph had come with von Braun's team to Huntsville, and these revelations altered how the American public viewed von Braun and the German scientists. Soon, the American press began referring to the German rocket scientists as Nazi rocket scientists. While this development had little to no effect on most Americans, it had a profound effect on the natives of Huntsville. The responses ranged from portraying Rudolph as a victim of the OSI to excusing his behavior because of his work on the Apollo program. The most extreme reactions included open antisemitism and Holocaust denial. Huntsville's white non-Jewish population largely defended Rudolph, recruiting local and regional politicians as well as educational and religious leaders to defend him. Not surprisingly, Huntsville's Jews saw broader implications with the case and did

not question his guilt. As for the German families in Huntsville, particularly the first generation, the Rudolph case produced anger, bitterness, and not a small amount of fear at what they regarded as a false or misleading portrayal of their experiences. The second generation widely believed that their parents, including Rudolph, had been the victims of both the Nazi regime and an overzealous American government. Even today, Huntsville's leaders are wont to ignore the past, both of the German rocketeers and their support for segregation.

Monique Laney conducted more than seventy interviews in writing *German Rocketeers in the Heart of Dixie*, and her book best fits into a field called Memory Studies—how the experience of groups or individuals (whether white, black, Jewish, or German) informed their understanding of the past. As such, this is not a traditional history of the German rocketeers' activities either under the Third Reich or in the United States. In fact, in the interviews with first-generation German scientists, Laney did not ask them about their involvement with the Nazis or the use of slave labor in the German V-2 rocket program. Her book relies little on archival research on the various segments of the Huntsville community. Readers seeking a conventional account of Operation Paperclip or of the wartime activities of the German scientists who came to Huntsville had best look elsewhere.

While Laney provides a fascinating exploration of how these groups and individuals understood their place in Huntsville and its environs, her study feels incomplete. The reactions of Jews and African Americans could and should have been developed to a greater degree, especially in regard to the similarities between Nazi racism and Jim Crow. The analysis of the Jewish reaction in particular is lacking, because the Huntsville Jewish community was not as insignificant as Laney suggests. Huntsville had a smaller Jewish population than Birmingham, but by 1960 it boasted the fourth largest Jewish community in the state. The civil rights struggle was largely centered in Alabama in the 1950s and early 1960s, yet Laney makes no mention of the civil rights demonstrations that roiled the state during that period, regardless of the book's subtitle. Despite these shortcomings, Monique Laney

nevertheless deserves praise for having written an engaging and illuminating study of Huntsville's reactions to the German scientists who settled and established new lives with their families in this northern Alabama community.

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That Pride of Race and Character: The Roots of Jewish Benevolence in the Jim Crow South. By Caroline E. Light. New York: New York University Press, 2014. 278 pages.

At the end of the nineteenth century, Jewish communities across the United States grappled with an immigration problem. Although they were usually only a generation or two distant from their own immigrant forebears, native-born Jews watched with concern as émigrés from the Pale of Settlement ballooned in numbers, enlarging the Jewish populations of their cities and towns. The growing presence of a European Jewish proletariat possessing meager economic resources and scant familiarity with the mores and cultural habits of the New World prompted established Jews to create organizations and institutions to aid their needy coreligionists.

But what sort of "aid" did immigrants need? Would economic and educational assistance suffice? Or should benevolent organizations actively encourage (or even aggressively coerce) these newcomers to become more "American," to assimilate in their appearance and behavior so that they would not stand out as different from the American mainstream? In her first book, Caroline E. Light examines turn-of-the-century American Jewish benevolent organizations and the ideologies that shaped their policies and practices. Like many other historians who have engaged this subject, Light finds that the men and women who ran these organizations were motivated by a paternalistic mix of compassion for eastern European Jews and disapproval of their foreign ways. She also points, as do others, to benevolence institutions'

surveillance of immigrants in even the most private of settings and suggests that immigrants resented and resisted their scrutiny.

Unlike the vast majority of the historians of such charged encounters, however, Light focuses on Jewish benevolence in a southern context and pays particular attention to Atlanta and New Orleans. In her analysis, Jewish life in the South, and the meaning and purpose of southern Jews' benevolence efforts, was determined almost wholly by the color line.

For Jews to feel truly acclimated to their surroundings—to feel that they were seen as southern and American in the eyes of their non-Jewish neighbors—they had to be white. According to Light, southern Jews' *gemilut hasadim* was suffused by the ulterior motive of “whitening” recent Jewish immigrants. A failure to do so, they feared, would tarnish their own respectability and undermine their claims to citizenship. Southern Jewish benevolence in the era of Jim Crow was thus a form of “race uplift,” Light writes, and it was implemented “in the name of self-preservation as well as altruism” (12).

Light focuses on organizational efforts to aid the most vulnerable and powerless among the recent Jewish immigrants. Officials of the Atlanta Hebrew Orphans Home and the New Orleans Jewish Orphans Home, two of the institutions founded to care for children whose parents had died or were unable to support them, were intent on molding their young charges into respectable and self-sufficient citizens. The boys were taught how to meet their future breadwinning responsibilities but dissuaded from manual labor, which would suggest that they were of similar

social status to African Americans and would place them in economic competition with blacks and other marginalized ethno-racial groups. The girls would learn to be worthy wives and responsible mothers, and, importantly, women of moral virtue and sexual purity—a most significant and meaningful quality in the Jim Crow South. All of these orphans, according to Light, would embody “the prevailing codes of racialized gender etiquette” (77).

Also of concern to benevolent Jews, according to Light, were *agunot*, Jewish immigrant wives whose husbands had disappeared or had deserted them and refused to grant them a *get*, a rabbinically approved divorce. Under the prevailing gender practices of the day, without Jewish institutional aid, such women would inevitably become public charges unless they turned away from Jewish tradition and remarried civilly without a *get*. For the leaders of the benevolence movement, both of these options were to be avoided at all costs. Light points out that between 1890 and 1920, between 10 and 15 percent of the Atlanta orphan home’s charges were the sons and daughters of abandoned women. Light’s chapter on the problem of the *agunah* includes an investigation of philanthropic efforts directed at Atlanta’s Sephardic population, who had migrated from Turkey, Greece, and the island of Rhodes in the early twentieth century. Here, too, she focuses on race, finding that the Montefiore Relief Association’s primary intent was to force Sephardim to conform to dominant racial sentiments.

It would be hard to argue against the claim that racial status mattered to southern Jews, especially those who were already established and deeply invested in maintaining their position in the region. But there are hazards to this kind of thesis-driven approach to historical evidence: it can tend toward an overly narrow interpretation that insufficiently takes other relevant (and perhaps, in their context, equally pressing) factors into account. Consider, for instance, the Jewish girls and young women whose sexual purity the orphan homes were so intent on protecting. For Light, when benevolent Jews fixated on Jewish girls’ “virtue,” they were in fact demanding that their charges conform to racialized gender codes. But it is equally likely that relief organizations’ primary concern was that young unmarried girls and women not

become pregnant for reasons that had less to do with racial ideologies than Light assumes.

Even so, *That Pride of Race and Character* will undoubtedly interest scholars of the southern Jewish experience. The author illumines sources that have previously received little attention and plumbs these materials with admirable thoroughness. Although the prose and structure of the book reflects a scholarly preference for detached analysis over poignant stories, and one might occasionally wish that her rigorous discourse analysis evinced a little more emotional force, Caroline Light has made a significant and valuable contribution to the field of southern Jewish history.

Marni Davis, Georgia State University

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The Rag Race: How Jews Sewed Their Way to Success in America and the British Empire. By Adam D. Mendelsohn. New York: New York University Press, 2015. 296 pages.

Adam R. Mendelsohn earned his Ph.D. at Brandeis University and served as associate professor of Jewish studies at the College of Charleston until his recent move to the University of Cape Town, South Africa, where he directs the Kaplan Centre for Jewish Studies and Research. This book marks him as one of the most promising scholars of American Jewish history. It is a deeply researched and engrossing comparative study of Jews in the garment industry of the nineteenth century in America and the British Empire. While the South was geographically remote from the major garment manufacturing centers of New York and Chicago, Jews in the region played a major role in the industry's development during the nineteenth century, and there is much in the book that will interest readers of this journal.

"It was in the West and South," Mendelsohn claims, "that Jews were to establish the initial foothold that enabled them to later conquer the clothing trade in New York" (56). Jews in

Charleston, New Orleans, Memphis, Louisville, and other southern ports were involved in the crucial cotton trade with northern and European garment manufacturers. One of these was Adolph Brandeis, whose son became a Supreme Court justice. The father was less successful, failing as a cotton broker in the 1870s. In exchange for the cotton, southerners imported luxury goods, including clothing from the North and Europe.

Over half of the garments manufactured in New York City during the 1850s were shipped to the South where southern merchants sold them, including Jews such as Leon Godchaux, who had established a fashionable clothing store in New Orleans in 1845. Godchaux moved to New York in 1858 where he opened a large garment factory to manufacture goods for his New Orleans store. Godchaux was not the only Jewish clothing merchant of the Crescent City. Forty percent of the Jews in New Orleans in 1860 worked in the clothing and textile trades, mostly as small shopkeepers. They comprised a quarter of the clothing and dry-goods business in the city even though they constituted no more than 3 percent of the population.

On the eve of the Civil War, one third of the Jews in the South lived in Louisiana, and many peddled along the cotton belt of the Mississippi and its tributaries. One German traveler to the delta reported it was common in the small towns to spy "a Jewish dandy decked out in the most tasteless fashion." This did not prevent him from purchasing a lightweight suit from the peddler. The landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, who traveled extensively throughout the South during the 1850s, warned that the "swarm" of Jewish peddlers he encountered was infecting the South with all sorts of maladies, including encouraging slaves to steal from their masters.

Such peddlers, including the first generation of the Seligman and Lehman families of banking fame, were part of an ethnic economic network that encompassed northern manufacturers and southern wholesalers and retailers. Many of these peddlers would eventually become wholesalers or open a "Jew store," which for a time played an important economic and social role in the small towns of the South. By 1880, two-thirds

of the stores in the important commercial center of Greenville, Mississippi, were owned by Jews, while Chinese merchants owned several others. For Mendelsohn, these humble Jewish traders of the South (and Midwest) “were the rumpled foot soldiers of the market revolution and the vanguard of an expanding ethnic economy” (72).

The Rag Race won the Jewish Book Council’s 2014 National Jewish Book Award in American Jewish Studies and is the latest in a series of recent books focusing on the role of Jews in various industries. These include Sarah A. Stein’s *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (2008); *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism* (2012), edited by Rebecca Kobrin; and Marni Davis’s *Jews and Booze: Becoming American in the Age of Prohibition* (2012). No industry was more important for Jews in the nineteenth century than clothing manufacture and sale. “In few other areas of the modern economy were Jews so central,” Mendelsohn observes, and “few other occupations left as important a legacy for modern Jewish history in the New World” (7).

The Rag Race is part of a larger debate among historians, economists, and sociologists regarding the relative importance of cultural versus purely economic factors in illuminating the diverse contributions of various ethnic and religious groups to economic development. One aspect of this debate is explaining why Jews during the past two centuries in Europe and America experienced such phenomenal rates of upward economic and social mobility. Were cultural values regarding work, enterprise, risk-taking, and money of prime importance? Or were factors distinctive to the

various industries in which Jews congregated more consequential? Mendelsohn is wary of attributing Jewish success to cultural values, perhaps because this might seem to be a form of ethnic-religious special pleading, and his book focuses on factors that directly impacted the garment industry such as the California gold rush of the 1840s and the Civil War.

In his book's early chapters, Mendelsohn discusses the factors that attracted Jews in great numbers to the rag trade, so much so that during the nineteenth century the Jewish ragmen of Petticoat Lane in London and Chatham Street in New York City became stock figures in the popular culture of both countries. This early involvement in the rag trade was the first rung up the garment industry ladder of success, and by the mid-twentieth century Jewish designers and manufacturers dominated the men's and women's clothing industry in New York City. A statue of a Jewish garment worker wearing a skullcap on his head sits in the heart of the city's garment center, a testament to the important role played by Jews in this industry.

American Jewish labor leaders came from the garment unions, many American Jewish fortunes were made in the clothing industry, and Jewish clothing designers were influential in showing Americans how to dress. They included a group of clothiers in New Haven, Connecticut, the home of Yale University, who conceived the Ivy League look of men's suits and jackets. American Jews were instructed in the first half of the twentieth century that the secret of upward social and economic mobility was "to think Yiddish and to dress British." But dressing Yiddish had also become a mark of success, as indicated by such names as Hart Schaffner & Marx, Calvin Klein, Ralph Lauren, Donna Karan, and Michael Kors.

The writing of comparative history is a formidable task, and in Mendelsohn's case it required a familiarity with the general political, economic, and social history of the United States and the British Empire, the history of the garment industries of both regions, and the history of Jews in central and eastern Europe, America, and the British Empire. Among the questions he sought to answer is why American Jews in the clothing industry did

much better financially than their British Empire counterparts. "The garment industry," he writes, "became an enabling occupation for the shiploads of new immigrants who arrived in both England and America beginning in the 1880s, although it propelled them forward at different speeds" (16). Why this was so is an extraordinarily difficult question to answer.

One factor mentioned by Mendelsohn was that the more concentrated population of England was already served by entrenched clothing merchants, and an advanced system of canals, roads, and railways had created a national market in which there was little demand for the goods offered by Jewish peddlers and Jewish-owned clothing stores. The less developed American transportation system and the more dispersed and isolated American population, by contrast, offered greater opportunities for nineteenth-century Jewish peddlers and merchants. These early ventures created "an expansive ethnic ecosystem that had momentous implications" for the later involvement of Jews in the garment industry (79). In addition, the acquisition of California in the 1840s provided additional opportunities for Jews willing to make the trek west. The rapidly growing American population created a rising market for garments, and the Civil War created a demand for military uniforms. The Civil War, Mendelsohn believes, was a watershed for American Jews in the garment trade. It resulted in a dramatic broadening of Jewish involvement in the manufacture of ready-made clothing and encouraged more Jews to enter the industry.

The garment industry in the United States, particularly in New York City, was flexible, dynamic, and decentralized, traits encouraged by the introduction of the sewing machine, which allowed clothing manufacturing to take place in cramped settings. It was not difficult to establish a garment sweatshop in a New York tenement apartment and not unusual for an American garment worker to become the manager or owner of a factory. In 1913, three-quarters of the firms producing men's clothing in New York City employed five or fewer employees. Here the divide between garment workers and owners was permeable and readily surmounted by the more ambitious. Employment in the needles trade

was generally a one-generation phenomenon for immigrant Jews in America but not for British Jews.

The British census of 1901 reported that less than 3 percent of Jewish men identified themselves as shopkeepers or traders. Jewish men in Britain were far less entrepreneurial than their American counterparts, and Mendelsohn is undoubtedly correct that a major trait of American Jewish immigrants was "the rapidity with which the typical worker sought to strike out on his or her own" (209). These Jewish immigrants viewed themselves as incipient petty entrepreneurs rather than members of a permanent proletariat, and the sweatshops, for all their faults, often served as their launching pads into middle-class respectability.

In England the footprint of Jewish clothing firms was "narrower and shallower" and the opportunities offered by the industry to the Jewish immigrants of the late nineteenth century more limited. They did not have access to "anything equivalent to the geographically dispersed ethnic networks and traditions of entrepreneurship created by peddlers, storekeepers, and wholesalers in the United States" or to "the resources, connections, and inspiration that such structures provided." The crucial factor in distinguishing the "centrifugal" American Jewish ethnic network from that of Britain's "centripetal" Jewish ethnic network was the much larger American Jewish population, which led, in turn, to a greater presence in all aspects of the country's garment industry. Because of the smaller number of Jewish garment manufacturers, wholesalers, contractors, jobbers, sewers, and retailers, Jewish garment workers in England had "fewer advantages when they entered the trade and fewer advantages when they later left it behind" (204-206). While eastern European Jews advanced economically more rapidly in England than other groups, "their passage was belabored when compared to their American counterparts" (228). But this was not due solely to differences between the two countries' garment industries.

Part of the story of the British and American garment industries lies outside the industries themselves. This larger story includes the new forms of merchandising in the nineteenth century, including department stores and mail-order catalogues; the

revolutions in communication and transportation brought on by the telegraph, telephone, steam-driven railroads, subways, and street cars; and the increased availability of capital. None of these are explored in depth in *The Rag Race*, nor does it probe some of the non-economic factors that might have affected the differing rates of Jewish economic mobility within the American and British garment industries. These include the saliency of antisemitism, zoning ordinances, regulations regarding wages and working conditions, and other governmental restrictions on economic enterprise, the prestige attached to industry and trade, the ability of labor unions to inhibit entrepreneurship, and the extent to which class consciousness in each country discouraged workers from seeking to rise into the ranks of managers and owners. *The Rag Race* is a good book, but a broader and deeper focus would have made it even better.

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Daughters of Israel, Daughters of the South: Southern Jewish Women and Identity in the Antebellum and Civil War South. By Jennifer A. Stollman. Boston: Academic Studies Press, 2013. 260 pages.

Jennifer Stollman rightly claims in the introduction to her book that historians often fall for simplifications in their studies of the American Jewish experience. According to Stollman, historians tend to underestimate the pre-1880 immigration by assuming that immigrants “readily and willingly shed their Jewishness” in return for their integration and assimilation into a welcoming American society—and that Jewish women especially were to blame (15, 17). Stollman, in contrast, strongly and correctly argues against assumptions that “a) southern Jews did not face anti-Semitism and b) during the antebellum and Civil War period, American southern Jews pressed ahead in the assimilation process” (16). *Daughters of Israel, Daughters of the South* shows how crucial women were in constructing and defending their Jewish

identity “while upholding the reigning notions of appropriate behavior for people of their sex” (19). Claiming that historians have assigned Jewish women a passive role in southern society, Stollman goes beyond familiar examples like Phoebe Pember to describe southern Jewish women’s activities in defending their and their families’ Jewish identities. As such, she rightly individualizes them beyond marriage and family.

In her introduction, Stollman criticizes a “trans-historical narrative of Jewish patriotism and productivity [that] unintentionally but effectively ignored the diversity in the American Jewish historical experience and downplayed American anti-Semitism” (12). Countering that narrative is the leitmotif of her work, and her call for nuance is laudable. *Daughters of Israel* argues that Jewish women ensured the survival of southern Judaism in a threateningly proselytizing Christian environment. In advancing this argument, Stollman subdivides her book into five chapters examining southern Jewish women’s roles in the fight against Christian proselytization, in Jewish education, as writers on antisemitism, in their interactions with slaves, and as Confederate ambassadors during the Civil War.

Stollman presents the methods and symbols through which southern Jewish women ensured their Judaism, and she mainly relies on their own writings. Some examples, however, may raise questions. Are these behaviors indeed inherent to the southern Jewish female perspective? Are a southern Jewish female identity and the quest to preserve it really evident in remembering Passover in the family circle if, as in chapter 1, the example Stollman uses is a convert to Christianity (63)? Is visiting a

European synagogue for Rosh Hashanah while on vacation a manifestation of a conscious or subconscious strategy to preserve Jewish identity, or is it simply a custom (59)? On the other hand, examples of public calls such as Penina Moïse's "Daughters of Israel, arise!" definitely are such a manifestation (53).

Stollman also asserts in chapter 1 that one "of the principle ways in which southern Jewish women demonstrated their dedication to Judaism was through their attachment to their synagogue," expressed through raising "funds for the building . . . , religious articles, and the salary of clergy." Decorations such as "silver Torah plates and lush Torah covers . . . reminded synagogue members that the female membership was central in demonstrating the holiness of the Torah and, subsequently, assuring the preservation of Judaism in the southern context" (40, 42). But is there any difference here from the overall rural—male and female—American Jewish experience, or even from the European one? As an arbitrary counterexample, in 1851, thus within Stollman's time frame, Jews in Magdeburg, Prussia, dedicated their synagogue. As reported in the *Allgemeine Zeitung des Judenthums*, the decoration included some "magnificent curtains and covers for the שולחן [*shulchan*] and pulpit, made in Berlin, [which] were gifts of a ladies' society devoted to this cause." Thus, is such activity a convincingly southern—or even American—phenomenon? It seems a common international practice that Jewish women and men worked together to preserve their Judaism.

The treatment of slaves, as Stollman rightly argues in chapter 4, manifested the wish to underscore Jewish women's whiteness, and thus their racial superiority. Yet, did they interact with their slaves as white Jewish women or simply as white slave owners? In other words, was there indeed a difference between the interactions of slaves with their Christian or Jewish mistresses? It might also be argued that this specific interaction was merely a manifestation of the general relations between black slaves and white women, with a nondefining Jewish dimension added to it. A comparison to non-Jewish slaveholding families could have supplemented the discussion.

Chapter 5, "An Ardent Attachment to my Birth," discusses Jewish women in the Confederacy. When presenting the conditions of the Civil War, Stollman asserts that "southern anti-Semitism encouraged southern Jewish women to find traditional feminine ways to actively display the loyalty to the Confederacy for all to see" (191). *Daughters of Israel* again places the possession of a minority religion at the root of southern Jewish patriotism. Stollman emphasizes that Jewish Confederate patriotism was, to a large degree, a strategy to counter antisemitism and to "advance southern Jewish women's goals of achieving southern society's tolerance of Judaism and equality for its adherents" (192). The examples described, however, such as fundraising, collecting supplies, or caring for the sick, were not specifically southern Jewish endeavors. These seem to have been activities of women nationwide. Did these southern Jewish women act any differently or, indeed, out of fear of antisemitism?

Most examples used throughout the book draw from the same background of rather wealthy upper-class women such as Phoebe Pember, Rebecca Ella Solomons Alexander, and the Mordecais (without presenting in detail the family's confusing interlinking of Jewish and Christian members, as Emily Bingham has done so splendidly elsewhere). Because *Daughters of Israel* relies heavily on diaries and personal writings, women of other social layers are underrepresented. They might indeed have acted out of fear of southern antisemitism during the Civil War. They might also have left the region or resisted the war, the Confederacy, or wartime scarcities. A discussion of that dimension of the social strata would have contributed to Stollman's thesis. In addition, upper-class southern Jewish women, as Stollman rightly claims, referred to the same biblical stories when describing the Civil War (47) as did northern Christian males. What, then, does this tell us about southern Jewish women? Here, as when her subjects invoke God in their correspondence (45), the author describes a common global religiosity of the nineteenth century, not necessarily a genuine southern female perspective.

Daughters of Israel rests fundamentally on the argument that Jewish women fiercely defended their families' Judaism against

an extremely hostile southern environment (and against indifferent or at least utterly passive husbands, it seems). Is it possible to draw a solid line between dedicated Jewish wives and devil-may-care Jewish husbands? Or is this rather an artificial barrier between male and female contributions? *Daughters of Israel* is often painted with heavy brushstrokes. Were women indeed the only defenders of their Judaism, and was the South as antisemitic as Stollman presents? Little of what is discussed seems specifically southern, and what is distinctive (slave ownership and how slaves were treated) lacks a particularly Jewish dimension. Nevertheless *Daughters of Israel*, *Daughters of the South* is a nice introduction to how women as individuals demonstrated their Judaism in an overwhelmingly Christian environment. A more nuanced, less categorical, or more comparative approach could add to the merits of this thought-provoking work.

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