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Mark K. Bauman, *Editor*Rachel B. Heimovics, *Managing Editor*Eric L. Goldstein, *Book Review Editor* 

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### **Book Reviews**

**Mordecai: An Early American Family.** By Emily Bingham. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003. 346 pages.

Emily Bingham's *Mordecai: An Early American Family* approaches the antebellum South differently than traditional narratives. This is not a historical work that centers on the "peculiar institution," sectional hostilities, or the stratified social systems of the "Old South." In fact, these traditional frameworks and factors are barely visible in Bingham's work. The author seems quite aware that numerous scholars have and will analyze these issues. Instead, Bingham employs a narrower framework, preferring to focus on the assimilation of three generations of an antebellum southern Jewish family. In doing so, she offers a new approach to scholars of the American South and of American Jewish history. For American Jewish scholars this is not a triumphalist narrative solely about antisemitism or one that privileges assimilation. Bingham correctly states that focusing solely on American Jewish struggles with spirituality is historically inaccurate since antebellum southern Jews endured private and public struggles common to other historical individuals of the era. In this family biography, Bingham examines how one early American family navigated these obstacles and negotiated their roles as respectable Jews, southerners, and Americans.

To situate the Mordecai family experience within the larger regional and national ideological context, Bingham employs the framework of "enlightened domesticity." Combining reigning early nineteenth-century religious and secular philosophies, this "family covenant" emphasized reason, liberal concepts of religion, virtue, intellectual cultivation, and individualism within the context of family and communal responsibility and stressed the home

as the site of material and spiritual support (5-6). Bingham argues that this philosophy profoundly shaped Mordecai family members' personal and public goals, their relations with each other, and the way they positioned themselves in their private and public lives.

Introduced to these ideals as children by the matriarch and patriarch of the Mordecai clan, Judith and Jacob, Mordecai family members redefined the family code as they matured to adulthood, constructing relevant secular and religious identities that appropriately fit in the larger antebellum southern and national contexts. These redefinitions caused both pride and conflict among and across the generations of the Mordecai clan. Confirming other scholarly findings on men during this period, Bingham argues that the Mordecai men created their public and private identities according to the developing individualist ethos, pursuing their public and private goals while only negligibly considering family wishes. In many ways, the Mordecai men fulfilled the expectations of their parents and grandparents and distinguished themselves in their chosen fields of law, medicine, and trade. Against family wishes, however, many used the philosophy and its foundational ideology of reason to justify unpopular choices such as rejecting certain career paths, engaging in exogamy, or supporting the Union.

Gender philosophies and coverture laws provided the Mordecai women with less freedom. For them, filial duty often conflicted with individual wishes, although they sometimes managed to exercise their own agency through persuasion and secretive strategies. Rachel Mordecai Lazarus publicly defended her Judaism, taught in her father's school, and was a dutiful daughter and wife, but after her own private spiritual conversion, she tried to influence her children's religious identities. Her sister, Ellen Mordecai, devoted her life to the family's well-being but also converted and made a rather successful living by publishing a book about her conversion experiences. Bingham highlights the Mordecai women's struggle with personal religious fulfillment and conflicting family beliefs. Clearly, the Mordecai men expected women to fulfill the tenets of enlightened

domesticity, to subordinate their ambitions to those of their male relatives, and to protect the family's reputation.

Reflective of the turbulent 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, enlightened domesticity proved to have an even more interesting effect on the third generation. One of Jacob and Judith's grandchildren, Marx Edgeworth Mordecai, often wrestled with his enlightened upbringing and its emphasis on reason as he worked toward selfactualization. He ultimately became a well-known speaker and writer on alternative medicine and an advocate of free love and abolitionism. His sister, Ellen Lazarus, matured into a radicalized feminist and was intent on becoming a hydropath, although her efforts were derailed by strong family objections. Spiritual wrestling, filial duty, and respectability routinely punctuated individual stories across the generations.

In creating such a descriptive family biography, the author mined through thousands of the Mordecai family's private and public documents. While strictly focused on tracing the events and experiences of the Mordecai family, this work is especially revealing about changing ideas about religion, race, economics, urbanization, medicine, sexuality, and gender norms. Perhaps the most interesting aspect of Bingham's work is the way in which she approaches assimilation, a topic often treated by scholars of the American Jewish experience. For Bingham, enlightened domesticity was an effective strategy of assimilation that still preserved fidelity to Judaism. Her framework provides nuance and offers plausible reasons for the high rates of exogamy and conversion during this period. Additionally, her approach compellingly suggests that assimilation for antebellum southern Jews was not direct or immediate, nor can it be traced through simple factors such as social anxiety or a desire to conform. Bingham depicts assimilation as a complex, uneven, and a very individualized experience affected by a host of external and internal pressures and goals. Scholars will do well to follow her lead and expand their understanding of assimilation as a process that is, among other things, inextricably linked to particular events, ideologies, family situations, geographical settings, class formations, and individual psyches.

The genre of biography presents its own problems, providing detailed focus on historical actors while sacrificing context. While Bingham's work is not comprehensively situated in the larger historical contexts of the Second Great Awakening, the economic turbulence of the Jacksonian Era, western migration, slavery, or the Civil War, knowledgeable readers will quickly recognize the events and reigning philosophies that affected the economic and social lives of the Mordecais. Bingham anticipates this problem and provides an extensive bibliographic essay whereby readers might consult other sources to learn more about specific events, ideologies, and issues raised by the Mordecai family experience. In some cases, the focus on the Mordecais leads to conclusions that contradict the findings of scholars writing more broadly about the social context of the antebellum South. The private sources utilized by Bingham, for example, suggest that antisemitism was virtually non-existent, although scholars of southern Jewry have argued that antisemitism did in fact exist in the nineteenth-century South in day-to-day exchanges, trading practices, and in politics. These shortcomings, however, are minor. Mordecai: An Early American Family will prove a compelling read for scholars and would make an excellent undergraduate selection to better illuminate the era for students.

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**Goldberger's War: The Life and Work of a Public Health Crusader.** By Alan M. Kraut. New York: Hill and Wang, 2003. 312 pages.

American Jewish communal life from its beginnings. Among the first associations established in the nascent Jewish communities of the nineteenth century were those providing aid to the sick, elderly, and pregnant women. The mass migration of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries began soon after the professionalization of medicine in the United States, and the medical profession proved a popular career choice for immigrant and second-generation American Jewish men and some women. Despite anti-Jewish quotas in medical schools in the 1920s to 1940s, the number of Jewish physicians in the United States grew disproportionately to the number of Jews in the general population. Young American Jews found medicine to be an accessible, socially desirable, and culturally honorable profession.

Dr. Joseph Goldberger was one of the young American Jews who found success in medicine. In fact, in a field of great importance for American Jews' social and economic standing, Goldberger achieved national recognition for his medical research. In Goldberger's War, Alan Kraut thoroughly documents the life and achievements of Goldberger, an officer of the U.S. Public Health Service who identified the general nutritional cause of pellagra and pioneered a cure for the disease, which ravaged the American South in the early twentieth century. Kraut is known to American Jewish historians, and to American historians in general, for his important study of immigrants, disease, and nativism, Silent Travelers: Germs, Genes, and the Immigrant Menace (1994). In Goldberger's War, Kraut extends his analysis of the nexus between medical and social history, providing a fascinating examination of the impact and limitations of one individual's efforts to effect social and scientific change. Of special interest to American Jewish historians, the book provides a snapshot of the important role of profession in modern Jewish identity, while also examining Goldberger's understanding of his own Jewishness. Jewish and southern historians alike will appreciate the insight Kraut provides into one American Jewish professional's observations about the socioeconomic structures of the New South.

Kraut places Joseph Goldberger's early years firmly in the context of turn-of-the-century immigrant Jewish life. Goldberger was born in 1874 in a village near the base of the Carpathian Mountains. His family immigrated to the United States when he was nine years old, prompted by his father's financial ruin. The

Goldbergers settled on Manhattan's Lower East Side, where Joseph's father followed a well-trod economic path from peddler to grocer. Joseph graduated from public high school, attended City College, and earned his M.D. at Bellevue Hospital Medical College. At the outbreak of the Spanish-American War in 1898, Goldberger, anxious to leave his private practice and combine his medical expertise with national service, applied for a position with the Naval Medical Corps. Turned down for military duty, he joined what would soon become the U.S. Public Health Service. His work there supported the refinement of his epidemiological skills through assignments working on malaria, yellow fever, and typhoid in Mexico, Puerto Rico, Louisiana, and Washington, D.C.

Kraut documents the importance of these experiences to the task that would consume Goldberger's attention for the rest of his career and life: fighting the yearly invasion of the South by the pellagra epidemic. Before Goldberger began the study of pellagra, national conferences bemoaned this scourge of the South. Physicians debated whether pellagra was a germ-born disease or the product of a mysterious nutritional deficiency. As part of their efforts to buoy the New South's reputation and economy, southern politicians and business leaders actively urged pellagra's study and eradication. Goldberger conducted his study of pellagra with prisoners, hospital patients, mill families, and others in Georgia and South Carolina, as well as in the Washington facilities of the National Hygienic Laboratory over several years. Kraut portrays him as skilled in library, lab, and field research, and as a crusader concerned as much about social reform as about individual sufferers. Opposition to Goldberger's work came from two corners. Some physicians dismissed Goldberger's conclusions about the nature of pellagra as a nutritional deficiency, considering his arguments a violation of what they knew from germ theory. In addition, southern elites did not always appreciate his indictment of lower-class southerners' poor diet and the socio-economic forces that encouraged it. They saw in his critique northern prejudice against the southern way of life and the possibility of negative economic repercussions for the fragile New South. In general, though, Joseph Goldberger's research and cure

recommendations impressed his colleagues and inspired later biographers, including Kraut, to lionize him and commemorate his work.

For historians of American Jewry, Goldberger's War offers a fascinating case study in modern Jewish identity, although this seems not to have been Kraut's primary concern. Contrary to historiographical observations about Jewish identity that stress conflict and negotiation, evidence Kraut provides suggests that Goldberger was generally unconflicted about his own Jewishness. He was entirely devoted first to his medical career and then to his family (although Kraut argues that Goldberger's family came first); he paid little attention to Judaism or Jewish communal matters. Goldberger's role as a physician and public health crusader, not as an American Jew, seems to have been his primary identity. Goldberger's is a story of easy integration not only into the medical profession, but also into American civil service, a field generally closed to Jews in other western countries. The ethos of medicine in the United States provided the open space that made it possible for Goldberger to pursue his vocation. Public health medicine replaced Judaism as the Most High to which Goldberger devoted his life.

This is not to say that Goldberger did not contemplate Judaism or his relation to it. Kraut mines courtship letters from Goldberger to his future bride, Mary Farrar, the daughter of a prominent Episcopalian family from New Orleans, which show him thinking through his views about Judaism and about religion in general. Though concerned over his Orthodox parents' feelings about intermarriage, Goldberger expressed a thoughtful, even philosophical, understanding that while Judaism was naturally a part of him, it was not a barrier to marrying his intended. Goldberger defies the mold of the thoroughly networked early twentieth-century American Jew, lacking affiliation not only with a synagogue (or other Jewish institutions), but also with clubs or other social institutions outside of work. This is in contrast to his wife, Mary, who was active in non-Jewish women's clubs in the Washington area. Goldberger's sense of his own Jewishness, in fact, seems remarkably postmodern: he was interested neither in

religion nor in ethnicity, but always considered himself Jewish. His funeral in 1929 perfectly encapsulates this unconflicted, thoroughly nontraditional quality of Goldberger's modern Jewishness: at a service presided over by the prominent Washington Reform Rabbi Abram Simon, his wife and colleagues scattered his cremated ashes over the Potomac River. While Kraut offers such evidence about Goldberger's relationship to Jewishness, he does not thoroughly pursue its implications for our understanding of American Jewish society as a whole. It will be the job of future historians to determine how Goldberger's life story might shape our understanding of American Jewish identity and communal life.

Kraut amply fulfills his charge as a biographer by offering a convincing case for Goldberger as public health crusader and pioneer. He presents Goldberger's triumphs and warts: his passionate and detailed study of pellagra from both human and biochemical perspectives, as well as his untroubled use of convicts and mental patients as human subjects. Goldberger truly can be, as Kraut desires, an historical case study for today's public health crusaders battling AIDS, another disease significantly affected by socio-economic forces. This book will certainly be of interest to American Jewish and southern historians, as well as to its primary audience of medical historians.

Jane Rothstein
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**South of the South: Jewish Activists and the Civil Rights Movement in Miami, 1945–1960.** By Raymond A. Mohl with Matilda "Bobbi" Graff and Shirley M. Zoloth. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2004. 263 pages.

 ${f R}$  aymond Mohl has written an exemplary case study of the civili rights movement in Miami that reverberates beyond its

boundaries. With its booming tourist industry and rapidly growing Jewish population, Miami was far from a typical southern city in the post World War II decades. Yet, those who struggled for civil rights faced most of the obstacles encountered elsewhere in the South, including violence, intimidation, legal harassment, and deception. Still, there were important differences, and Mohl frames his account by focusing on perhaps the most significant one: the interracial alliance of local African Americans and Jews, especially Jewish women, to overturn segregation in schools and public accommodations.

Mohl argues that Jewish women radicals who moved to Miami from the North, especially Matilda "Bobbi" Graff and Shirley Zoloth, made vital contributions to the civil rights movement through their activism and willingness to work with blacks for common goals of equality. He notes that both women grew up in left-wing immigrant households and came to civil rights through previous commitments to progressive causes. Both supported the presidential campaign of Henry Wallace. Graff joined the Communist Party and quickly linked up with labor organizers and other communists when she settled in Miami after the war. Zoloth's activism grew out of Zionist involvement and women's movement work for peace, and she found partners on the progressive, noncommunist left among Miami's Jews when she arrived in the mid-1950s. Both women were mothers, who shared their dedication to interracial causes with their husbands. Apart from their zeal for politics and integration, they resembled many other middle-class Jewish women in Miami and other cities in the postwar period. But, as Mohl reveals, radical politics occupied the center of their consciousness, and they threw themselves into efforts to change Miami's southern segregated society.

As white women, Graff and Zoloth represented the majority population in Miami and they used their whiteness to further the cause of integration. In the late 1940s this meant joining the Civil Rights Congress (CRC) for a communist like Graff; in the late 1950s this meant joining the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE) for Zoloth. As Mohl points out, these organizations' grass-roots approach to civil rights issues often conflicted with the more elite

policies of the NAACP. Nevertheless, Florida's anticommunist investigations as well as the House Un-American Activities Committee disrupted the NAACP and decimated the CRC. Graff fled to Canada after being served with a subpoena four days after giving birth to her third child. "Our biggest crime," she later reflected "was bringing blacks and whites together" (47). Zoloth, arriving in Miami around the time that Graff was driven out, did not suffer such persecution. Her activities in CORE, designed to integrate lunch counters, anticipated by a year the more famous student efforts that propelled the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee into the limelight of civil rights activism. Zoloth remained in Miami, dedicated to dismantling segregation and creating a more just society.

Graff and Zoloth were not only white, but also Jewish. Both identified as Jews and considered their activism part of their Jewish heritage. They drew upon networks of other Jews in Miami and pursued their interracial politics largely with other Jews. Mohl recognizes the Jewish dimensions of their story and pays attention to where these civil rights activists differed from established Jewish organizations, which tended to be more fearful about advocating integration or expressing support for individuals accused of being communists. He also explores reasons for fear among Jews as bombs exploded in synagogues in Miami and other southern cities. Although he does not focus upon rabbinical leadership, he does mention the involvement of local branches of such national Jewish organizations as the American Jewish Congress and the American Jewish Committee.

Mohl largely confines his history to a long essay that contextualizes the Miami experience with civil rights within several frameworks. He looks at how the Miami story contributes to the extensive scholarship on the relationship of Jews and blacks in the civil rights movement. He compares the Miami situation with developments in other southern cities. He indicates how the participation of the two women activists and their female friends strengthens recent reinterpretations regarding mothers' roles in the postwar decades. And he highlights the critical impact of the alliance of segregationists and anticommunists, especially the

importance of government investigations in dismantling left-wing interracial coalitions of Jews and blacks. Then he stops and lets the reader meet Bobbi Graff and Shirley Zoloth in their own words.

Two thirds of the book consists of Graff's memoir of her years as an activist in civil rights and Zoloth's reports and letters describing the CORE sit-ins in 1959. Reading their accounts provides alternative perspectives to Mohl. I was struck by several of Zoloth's letters to the National Council of Jewish Women from 1960. Both address the question of political support and activism. Zoloth writes to inquire about participating with NOW to work for desegregation of Miami public schools and then to request help in opposing antisemitic attacks on a Jew running for the school board. The letters suggest that Zoloth had not despaired of involvement by mainstream Jewish women's groups although much of her civil rights work occurred outside of Jewish organizations. Graff's memoir shows how her friendships cut across lines of religion, race, and class as well as revealing how she coped with FBI surveillance and informers. She also reflects upon the tensions in her roles as mother and activist, and the occasionally painful choices she made.

South of the South would make a marvelous teaching book since it includes two very different types of primary sources (a memoir and letters), as well as Mohl's essay. There is also an extensive bibliography and detailed notes. One could start reading from the back of the book, beginning with Zoloth's contemporary accounts, then moving on to Graff's memoir, and finally reaching the historical analysis. Issues of interpretation, memory, and history as well as race, class, gender, region, and Jewish political culture provide intersecting conceptual tools with which to understand a complex drama set in Miami but extending far beyond in its significance.

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And the Dead Shall Rise: The Murder of Mary Phagan and the Lynching of Leo Frank. By Steve Oney. New York: Pantheon Books, 2003. 742 pages.

Thoroughly researched and absorbingly written, Steve Oney's **L** And the Dead Shall Rise sets a new standard for those who study the lynching of Leo Frank. Oney's contribution to the field is primarily a matter of dilation and detail. Minor characters get more attention from Oney than they have from other writers, and all of the players are given histories and contexts that help to explain their motives. Passing incidents, too, are inspected more closely and are given more weight than elsewhere. All of these details are harnessed to serve a well-told story; Oney is a journalist, but he has a novelist's ear for dramatic narrative.

The level of detail has been a source of some criticism of the book, and indeed it is difficult (and probably unnecessary) for the reader to keep track of all the dramatis personae. But, criticizing And the Dead Shall Rise as too long or overly detailed misses the point entirely: these details enrich our understanding. The depth of his examination of the Atlanta press, for instance-its tendency toward sensationalistic reportage, and the impact of William Randolph Hearst's ownership of the Georgian-helps the reader comprehend the public's almost hysterical interest in the case. Preexisting local fears about child labor and industrial capitalism exacerbated that hysteria, which mobilized the sale of newspapers and advanced careers. That a Jew became its object terrified members of Atlanta's Jewish community, and Oney critically and compassionately portrays their unwavering defense of Frank, and then their increasing dread as his fate darkened.

The action begins in April 1913 when thirteen-year-old Mary Phagan was brutally murdered in Atlanta, Georgia. Her battered corpse was found in the basement of the pencil factory where she worked, and police examiners suggested that she might have been raped. The search for her killer galvanized the city, and Frank, the factory's superintendent and a German Jew born in Texas but raised in Brooklyn, quickly became one of the prime suspects, as he was the last person to admit to seeing her alive. He was put on

trial for murder that summer, and Frank became, Oney writes, "a pawn in a battle between divergent factions at war over Atlanta's future" (104).

The prosecution's case against him rested on unreliable sources and mostly circumstantial evidence. The Atlanta police department decided upon Frank's guilt early in the investigation, and Oney's description of their shameless corruption and general ineptitude is particularly disturbing. The testimony of Jim Conley, a black sweeper at the pencil factory and the pivotal witness, was riddled with inconsistencies and admitted perjuries. The lead attorney for the state also made a number of inadmissible insinuations about Frank's Jewishness, playing upon stereotypes of the Jew as a bankrolled outsider and sexual deviant. Even still, and perhaps due to several miscalculations on his lawyers' part, Frank was found guilty and sentenced to be executed, much to the delight of the local crowd in and around the courthouse. Popular opinion had turned against Frank over the course of the trial, partly due to Tom Watson's viciously antisemitic and increasingly popular newspaper, the Jeffersonian.

For the next two years, several influential northern institutions, the New York Times and the American Jewish Committee especially, worked on Frank's behalf, raising funds for his defense and engineering a nationwide publicity campaign. John Slaton, Georgia's governor, was persuaded both by the lobbyists and the evidence to commute Frank's sentence to life imprisonment in June 1915. Outraged by what they considered the imposition of northern power and Jewish money on Georgia politics, a group of twenty-five men from Marietta, Georgia, where Mary Phagan's family had once lived, decided to avenge the girl's murder by means of vigilante justice. That August, they kidnapped Frank from the prison farm where he was incarcerated, drove him to Marietta, and lynched him from a tree near the Phagans' old property.

Oney's recounting of the Mariettans' lynching conspiracy is his most significant contribution to Leo Frank studies. Until recently, southern lynching parties in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were assumed to have come from the lower socio-economic strata of white society and to have used racial violence as an expression of their class resentment. Oney's research, however, corroborates what more recent scholars have written about lynchers, and, it turns out, what everyone in Marietta knew about Frank's lynchers all along. The group that murdered Frank was made up of some of Marietta's most well-known and respected citizens. Legislators, a judge, and a former Cobb County sheriff participated in the lynching and then conspired with much of Marietta's population to keep the identities of all involved an open secret. Oney describes the particulars of these men's habits, their environment, and their political aspirations. In doing so, he shines brighter light on the nature of their hostility to Frank (and Jews in general), as well as their resentment toward "outsiders" (especially northerners) who "meddled" in local affairs.

Lynchings were not uncommon at the time; Oney points out that Frank's was one of twenty-two such deaths in 1915 in Georgia alone (513). But the events surrounding Frank's death have enduring resonance and stand as a particularly notorious example of American bigotry. The lynching of Leo Frank has been the subject of more analysis than any other single lynching in American history, a fact which, considering that African American men were almost always lynching's victims, deserves to be the subject of its own study. And the Dead Shall Rise joins a historiography that spans ninety years and includes historical studies of American antisemitism, polemics by Frank's outraged defenders, literary deconstructions of race and gender, novels, and movies, and even a Broadway musical. While Oney offers no original theoretical insights, he has provided the most complete version of the story. The sheer depth and detail of his work will make it the authoritative account of Frank's murder, as well as a vital resource for any study of the American South or American Jewish history during the Progressive Era.

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