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**Marnie Jones**. *Holy Toledo: Religion and Politics in the Life of 'Golden Rule' Jones.* Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1998. X+293 pp. $29.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8131-2062-1.

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**Holy Toledo But Not Wholly Toledo**

It is somewhat unusual for an academic to be in a position to study one of their own dead ancestors. Marnie Jones, an associate professor of English and director of the honors program at the University of North Florida, sets out to understand the life and times of her great-grandfather, Samuel Milton Jones, a man she knew only as a distant name on the family tree. Prof. Jones delves into the heart and soul of the man who was mayor of Toledo from 1897-1904, a man known as "Golden Rule" Jones for what was the touchstone of his moral and political philosophy, a politician whose integrity and honesty made him the much heralded conscience of the Progressive movement. To find him Marnie Jones treks to the Jones family's village in the craggy mountains of Wales, to the oil ghost towns of Pennsylvania, and admirably sifts through the vast collection of Golden Rule Jones' correspondence that, until now, has been left embarrassingly untouched.

Marnie Jones approaches her subject as a literary scholar equipped with all the tools of critical analysis, psychology, and hermeneutics and, unsurprisingly, has produced a detailed examination of Jones' psychology but a weak examination of the historical forces that propelled him onto the historical stage. Prof. Jones portrays Samuel Jones as the heroic leader who drags the populace of Toledo behind him into the Golden Age of reform. In fact, as Charles N. Glaab and Morgan Barclay insightfully pointed out over a decade ago, Jones was as much the product of Toledo as modern Toledo was the creation of Jones. "Historians of the Progressive Movement have asserted that Jones introduced into urban government a simple version of the Social Gospel and of Christian Socialism ... Actually, Jones drew on long-standing traditions of reform in Toledo." Glaab and Barclay document the reform tradition in Toledo that stretched back to early Quaker settlers, German 48'ers, and radical Republicans and was broadened by Unitarian idealists, greenbackers, a strong and vital labor movement, and women's suffragists later in the century (see Morgan Barclay and Charles N. Glaab, *Toledo: Gateway to the Great Lakes.* Tulsa, Ok: Continental Heritage Press, 1982, pp. 85-88).

In spite of the title, Marnie Jones's, *Holy Toledo: Religion And Politics in the Life of 'Golden Rule' Jones*, is not really about Toledo, but only about Jones. This is evident from the book's index where there are twice as many topics under the heading "character and formative events" - such as "anger: asthma a result of", "birth order and radicalism", and "shame as shaper of identity" - than there are under the heading "politics". Yet even in the political column, as in such political topics as "self-denial and gubernatorial race", the over-psychologizing creeps in (pp. 283-88)

*Holy Toledo* barely connects Golden Rule Jones with the politics of this tumultuous city. Its treatment of two of the city's most long-running and bitter controversies is superficial at best. She devotes but a page and a half to Jones' concluding role in Toledo's twenty-year conflict with the gas and oil trusts. Though Jones' role was but a coda on a greater historical episode, the battle itself reveals much about the political and economic interests at work in Northwest Ohio. (For details of this fight, see "The Toledo Natural Gas Pipe-Line Controversy" in Chester McArthur Destler, *American Radicalism, 1865-1901* (New London, CT: Connecticut College, 1946, pp. 105-34.) Later, saying "the details of the traction fight in Toledo are complex" Marnie Jones devotes fewer than two pages to one of the most important political fights of Golden Rule Jones' career, his battle over the terms of franchise with the rapacious traction companies (p. 220). The secondary sources on this episode are plentiful. Prof. Jones does not mention or cite the three-part article on this affair that Randolph C. Downes, dean of Toledo's historians, published forty years ago in the *Northwest Ohio Quarterly* (not the "*Northeastern Ohio Quarterly Bulletin*" as Marnie Jones mistakenly refers to it elsewhere, p. 275). These details may be complex, but are they any less com-

plex than the workings of this fascinating man's mind?

When she does turn her attention to Golden Rule Jones' politics and legacy, Marnie Jones is, like many biographers, tempted to overstate the uniqueness and importance of her subject. Everything becomes a first or foremost. Jones' first election in 1897 was certainly dramatic but was it really "the most extraordinary election in American municipal politics"? (p. 1). Marnie Jones credits Golden Rule Jones with being "one of the earliest municipal reformers to improve urban life by creating recreational parks to improve the environment" (p. 96). As Jones did not get involved in the park movement until the late 1890s when hundreds of parks had already been planted in cities across the nation it seems a little breathless to call him one of the "earliest" in this particular field of reform. Moreover, in Toledo, another urban reformer, Sylvanus Jermain, must be given the lion share of the credit for building the park system, not Jones.

The core of this book is a detailed analysis of Golden Rule Jones' psychological development. Marnie Jones describes her book as having a "phenomenological perspective" with which she claims to look "beneath the surface" of Jones' own writings to discover the real man underneath. Freud, Erik Erikson, and William Meisner are all brought to bear upon Jones' psyche and, predictably, we find that the mainsprings of Jones' behavior were "overpowering feelings of guilt and shame" (p. 39). One thing puzzles this reviewer, however, how is it that a man of such internationally renowned integrity and honesty, a teetotalling, physical culture faddist, Battle Creek cereal-chomping, generous-to-a-fault man for whom there are no recorded scandals or peccadilloes of any kind–what can such a man feel guilty and shameful about? In his autobiography Jones himself admits to a couple minor dishonesties for which he was truly remorseful: when a poor young man he lied to an inn-keeper about his means so as to secure a room and later tricked another man into mailing a letter for him to his mother. However, Marnie Jones is convinced that what she perceives as Jones' deep sense of compounding guilt/shame was fueled by something more than the incidents he describes in his own autobiography. Perhaps her Freudian analysis depends upon it. Deep into Chapter Two she discovers it! The "proof". Because Jones devotes only three sentences to his life from 1867-1870 and over twelve pages to his life in Pithole, Pennsylvania, he therefore must be circling around some unnamed sin. "Further proof that he engaged in some unnamed sin can be seen in the fact that, once he moves on to consider the subsequent years, the autobiographer does not chastise his earlier self for his attempt to get something for nothing" (p. 50). Thus the lack of evidence is actually the final clue to the riddle and the capstone to a general theory of Jones.

Marnie Jones applies her psychological analysis even to the physical maladies that eventually killed her great-grandfather. Declaring that asthma was "an illness tied to the patient's emotions" Marnie Jones concludes that Golden Rule's adult-onset asthma was the result of his guilt and shame over his former business success in a time of poverty and distress: "His distance from the Golden Rule translated into his inability to get enough air. These feelings of inadequacy could not be entirely repressed: they emerged in his nightly fight for air" (p. 75). Rather than concluding that Jones was a neurotic hypochondriac, Prof. Jones should have considered the possibility that Jones' malady might have been related to moving to a congested, industrial city, located around the swampy lowlands of eastern Lake Erie, a city known for its oil refineries, glass factories, and other unrestrained polluters of the air. I doubt it is necessary to plumb the psyche of the man as much it is sufficient to assay the air he breathed.

More distressing to this reviewer than the imposition of Freudian analysis upon Golden Rule Jones' ideology and medical conditions is the cavalier historical conclusions that Prof. Jones draws from ambiguous sources. Marnie Jones portrays Samuel Jones's second wife, Helen Beach Jones, as a shrew who diverted Golden Rule from his personal quest to renounce the trappings of upper crust life. As usual, Marnie Jones goes beyond her reasonable speculations about the Jones' couples differing views of reform and alleges that their marriage was on the rocks after his discovery of the Golden Rule: "There is considerable evidence to suggest that there was increasing marital tension" (p. 95). What "considerable evidence" merits this sensational news? Precious little, at least judging by Prof. Jones' citations.

Prof. Jones' chief evidence is a letter Jones sent to his best friend Nelson O. Nelson asking him to recommend a "reasonable" hotel in St. Louis, "Of course, you know I shall not be as free with my wife along or I would not be asking questions, but even with her, I do not want to go to the Platers of any other five dollar a day hotel" (p. 229). Does the fact that Samuel hated staying in fancy hotels but at the same time didn't want to make his wife endure a few nights in a World's Fair flop house add up to "a strain between husband and wife"? Revealingly, Marnie Jones claims that this domestic strain emerges from this document "as clear[ly] as any other document", a claim that rings true given the tissue-thin substance of the oth-

ers (p. 229). A final key piece of evidence seems to be that Golden Rule, as part of his physical culture regimen, regularly slept in the screen porch rather than a normal bedroom. This, Marnie Jones concludes in a serious lapse of marital imagination, "suggests much about his physical relations with Hele" (p. 211).

The source of the marital tension, Marnie Jones writes, was that Helen did not share Golden Rule's values: "[Helen] was no socialist. She lived until 1939 and remained a prominent member of Toledo society. The facts of her final thirty-five years are utterly at odds with the life she shared with Sam Jones for twelve years" (p. 95). Indeed, "There are strong suggestions that fundamentally Helen did not agree with the philosophy of selflessness her husband now advocated" (p. 95). As throughout this interesting book, this is a valid and provocative speculation, but it is stretched over a rather thin factual framework. Only deep in endnote eleven will you find that Helen Beach Jones carried on Jones' progressive ideals after his death by founding a shelter for homeless women, an action that I doubt increased her standing with Toledo's conservative country club set (p. 252).

*Holy Toledo*, I hope, will stand as the last word on Samuel Jones' character and inner psychological makeup. Marnie Jones has thoroughly speculated about every nuance of Golden Rule's mind. Now all that remains is for someone to stand on her shoulders and begin to locate this carefully scrutinized mind in its place and time. I, for one, would like to know the answer to such mundane material questions as how Sam Jones made his money. At one fell swoop, Golden Rule Jones' went from being a failed oil worker to marrying Alma Bernice Curtiss whose family were "people of substance" and whose father was a "prominent citizen", a "successful insurance salesman", and an owner of a large farm. But of Jones' rapid climb to the top, Prof. Jones has only this vague account: "With an investment of $700, he (Jones) secured oil leases ..." Oil leases that proved to be the seed of his later fortune. But where did Jones get his $700? Can we conclude that it was a benefit of marriage? Did Jones, the vaunted self-made man, in fact marry his seed money?- Golden Rule Jones, the economic man and the political man, still awaits his biographer.

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