

Reiko Hillyer. *Designing Dixie: Tourism, Memory, and Urban Space in the New South.* The American South Series. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2014. xi + 266 pp. \$46.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8139-3670-3.



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Reconsidering the New South

Reiko Hillyer's *Designing Dixie* is an ambitious effort to explore the meanings of the New South as a construct of political, economic, and cultural power in the aftermath of the Civil War. Providing a new twist on C. Vann Woodward's depiction of a colonial economy, Hillyer shows how tourism served as a form of cultural contact and economic development. Hillyer's fresh approach and her provocative conclusions make *Designing Dixie* an interesting addition to the literature about the postbellum South. She focuses her study on the Civil War and its meaning, how southern whites struggled to fashion memory to their advantage in a process of rebuilding a society based on white supremacy. New South boosters—a class of journalists, business leaders, and politicians who relentlessly advocated economic growth—used their remembered past to advance their agenda of economic development and white supremacy. What is perhaps most novel about Hillyer's work is how she links the familiar topic of memory with travel by northerners in the postwar South. Relying on a close reading of the built environment, she joins other studies that explore

tourism in the American South as a cultural encounter with broader meaning beyond leisure.

Designing Dixie employs this concept of tourism in the broadest possible sense, encompassing any travel, whether leisure or business. Travel accounts to the South by northern and European visitors were familiar long before the Civil War; after Appomattox, they offer, to Hillyer, an example of tourism. Travelers of the 1860s, such as Whitelaw Reid and John Trowbridge, described the South as defeated but unrepentant. They advocated the reformation of the defeated Confederacy by instilling values of a free-labor society and altering the social foundations of the South. Yet, by the end of Reconstruction, economic development, deemed essential to ridding the region of the vestiges of the slave regime, had overshadowed goals of freeing and enfranchising former slaves. Beginning with Massachusetts native Edward King's *The Great South* (1875), northern views of the South became more sympathetic, portraying the South as ripe for development. Reconciliation between North and South required a common consensus about white supremacy and

a new partnership between northern and southern capitalists.

Hillyer situates her study in three very different New South communities: St. Augustine, Florida; Richmond, Virginia; and Atlanta, Georgia. In all of these places, boosters drove post-Civil War development by embracing the past while reconstructing its meaning. Concerned with attracting northern capitalists in order to stoke southern growth, the boosters' main purpose was to whitewash history by avoiding memories of slavery's wartime destruction. In St. Augustine, this constructed past emphasized resorts with a Spanish Renaissance revival theme, with little said about the town's (and Florida's) Confederate identity. Northern industrialist Henry Flagler transformed St. Augustine seeking to remake it into a winter Newport by linking Florida's east coast by railroad and by constructing huge new resorts. St. Augustine's Ponce de Leon Hotel, constructed between 1885 and 1888, exhibited a fantastically conceived built environment of Gilded Age excess. St. Augustine during the pre-World War I years anticipated the importance of tourism in Florida's subsequent growth, though in many respects the birth of modern tourism in the state overshadowed the town. By emphasizing the Spanish past and ignoring the heritage of slavery and the Confederacy, Hillyer writes, Flagler's version of history "cast in concrete the city's claim to Spanish heritage, untainted by reminders of sectional friction in the recent past" (p. 45).

Richmond was a much different place: the largest industrial city of the antebellum South, it was also the Confederacy's capital. There, southern capitalists, according to Hillyer, crafted the past to emphasize its colonial and revolutionary past at the expense of the Civil War. Seeking northern interest and investment collectively part of tourism, Richmond boosters stressed the city's (and Virginia's) role in the nation's founding. New South development became a "natural outgrowth of the traditional traits of colonial Richmonders, assuring potential visitors and investors that the industrial development of the region would be characterized by virtue and order" (p. 94). Relying on this romanticized past, Richmond's boosters legitimated the New South's emphasis on white supremacy and economic development.

But how then did Richmond become the proud defender of the Confederate past? Here, Hillyer's explanation is unconvincing. The location of the Robert E. Lee statue, erected in 1890 as the first large statue on a grand new boulevard, she maintains, "expressed the fusion of

the Lost Cause and New South, and demonstrated that the Lost Cause and economic growth were not incompatible" (p. 130). The development of Monument Avenue in the heart of Richmond's western suburbs formed part of a larger plan to promote urban growth. Richmond's business elite, Hillyer concludes, "embraced the tenets of the Lost Cause and welcomed its memorialization throughout the city," but "courting northern investment also required a progressive rather than pastoral face" (p. 90). Hillyer acknowledges that this fusion of real-estate development and Confederate memorialization provided a way in which boosters realized their New South vision, but she avoids another conclusion: that remembering the Civil War became a key part of the city's identity.

Hillyer's third locale, Atlanta, proves an even less likely site of the intersection of tourism and economic development. Because of its dominant position as a railroad, distribution, and financial center during and after the Civil War, Atlanta became the postwar South's most important interior city. As Hillyer points out, its urban ethos expressed pure capitalistic development, without the hindrance of history. The Civil War and Atlanta's destruction "became celebrated as a liberating event. Boosters, in a narrative developed after the war, emphasized opportunities for renewal out of wartime destruction. Atlanta constructed large hotels, beginning with the mammoth 307-room Kimball House, which was completed in 1870. By the early twentieth century, the city hosted numerous visitors in downtown hotels, playing a leading role in the convention trade of the Southeast.

Atlanta in many ways offers the best example of how the Civil War and its aftermath intersected with a socially constructed New South. Rather than forgetting the war, Atlanta business leaders, speaking through such mouthpieces as Henry W. Grady, made the Civil War the centerpiece of their version of the future. They reassured northern whites that a new intersectional bargain included outsiders as full partners in a unique blend of economic development, a reimagined past, and a built environment. Boosters promoted Atlanta as less southern than the rest of the region; the city, they often said, was the "Chicago of the South." Rather than hindered by Old South baggage, according to this narrative, Atlanta was connected to a larger metropolitan, urban-industrial world. This was a city, writes Hillyer, that embraced "northern-style bustle, cosmopolitanism, and modernity" (p. 135). Most important, Atlanta became a city defined around the New South message whose main import was that the region

was open for business.

Employing some familiar and some novel sources and methodologies, Hillyer is inventive in her interpretive design and fearless in her willingness to take on conventional wisdom. Yet her overall argument ultimately proves unsatisfying. Black people remain largely outside of the conversation, except as objects of white op-

pression. Whether âtourismâ can encompass as much as she contends seems dubious, when the real centers of the emerging cultural industries of tourism were located outside of the locales she considers. Her presentation is often ahistorical, moving across time without enough attention to chronology. In the end, the New South remains a central construct of power that *Designing Dixie* only partially explains.

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