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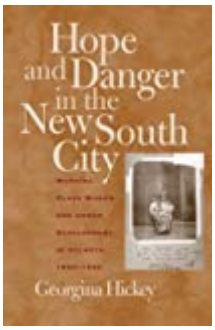

Georgina Hickey. *Hope and Danger in the New South City: Working-Class Women and Urban Development in Atlanta, 1890-1940.* Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2003. viii + 287 pp. $39.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8203-2333-6; $22.95 (paper), ISBN 978-0-8203-2772-3.

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Georgina Hickey, a professor of history at the University of Michigan, Dearborn, has written a careful, well-researched and incisive study of the role of working-class women in the shaping of Atlanta. By focusing on this group, she is able to introduce issues of class, race, work, leisure, politics, social order, and mores, the use of urban space as well as gender as ways to understand city development.

As is typical of Atlanta, image and city reputation were overriding concerns. As the city grew, women's roles became particularly important in defining, for example, the moral order and health-related perceptions the Atlanta elite and middle class wished to project. The view of disease illustrates the prime but flexible role working-class women of both races fulfilled. Initially concerned about the moral behavior of working-class women, the city's leaders expanded their attention to include disease as well. Controlling the moral order also meant controlling working-class women's bodies since these women were considered to be the reason contagious illnesses such as tuberculosis became epidemic in the city and venereal disease rates increased. Regulating women's lives served various functions, as the author writes: "these policies institutionalized public scrutiny of both women's lives and their bodies. The punitive and therapeutic treatments aimed at these women served to reinforce a particular social order while promoting an image of moral and physical health" (p. 109). It was an easy step from worrying about disease to inviting public reviews of these women's lifestyles, dwellings, and occupations. In some cases, this scrutiny brought beneficial results, as with the creation of a public health effort and the beginning attempt to deal with unhealthy neighborhood situations.

In other examples, working-class women's roles became part of the analysis of such significant local and national events as the Leo Frank case and the Fulton Bag and Cotton Mills strike. In 1913, Frank's trial evoked concerns about women's place in the industrializing city in relation to the moral dangers of factory work and of the city itself. The case was part of an on-going discussion about wage-earning independent women and the role of the male breadwinner. The 1914-1915 Mills strike indicated working-class women's labor activism as well as how unions used their presence to illustrate the disruption and abuse the mill owners caused in women's lives.

What is most effective about this history is that the actual lives and voices of these women are brought into sharp focus. We see them in Atlanta's various venues of work and leisure, particularly in the 1900-1920 period. After World War I, city leaders' and middle-class attention began moving from morals to economics. Middle-

class women became more interested in consumerism than the plight and role of poorer women. Welfare and public health issues centered more on children. By the 1930s, the focus was on unemployed men and the city's economic reputation was paramount.

Hickey presents an effective analysis of working-class women as a major element in defining and shaping Atlanta's social and moral order. Although her claim that "race was not necessarily the sole or most salient identity of southerners, [that] sometimes, gender and class position mattered even more" (p. 5) in this segregated city is debatable, this is a fine study which brings the issue of gender fully into an understanding of Atlanta's development.

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