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Authorship, Audience, and Ethos in Postbellum Florida Guidebooks

Elizabeth Powers, *University of Maine
at Augusta*

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Florida—like other ex-confederate states—was in economic, political, and social turmoil. Across the region, agricultural production was slow, political nominations and elections were commonly accompanied by violent outbursts, and racially based terrorism devastated communities. But unlike other ex-confederate states, postbellum Florida experienced immense growth, in both population and tourism. The population of Florida grew from 188,000 in 1870 to 529,000 in 1900. This influx of year-round and summer residents came about, in large part, through Northern investors seeing an opportunity to

develop the South's least populated state. Northern investment in the southern state brought with it a proliferation of marketing materials, including travel guidebooks, a genre which may be seen as "a crucial part of the touristic process" that "mediates the relationship between tourist and destination, as well as the relationship between host and guest" (Bhattacharyya 1997, 372). Guidebooks, then, can play a significant role in shaping tourist-heavy areas and tourist experiences. Florida underwent an extensive identity re-imagination in the 1860s and 1870s, and examining how guidebooks constructed the relationship between potential tourists and Florida allows us to see ways in which tourist activity in the state was imagined and materialized. During this period, Florida was newly constructed as an available, untamed wildness, an image assisted by the circulation of

some of the print guidebooks among Northern middle and upper class travelers. These postbellum Florida guidebooks offered a Northern audience of potential tourists, immigrants, and investors a desirable version of Florida they could potentially shape and experience. The guidebooks' vision of Florida as an available wilderness is constructed, in part, through their representation of the audience as manly and industrious. This characterization of the audience and the image of a wild Florida were intertwined in a conceptualization of Florida travel that shaped tourists' selves and experiences in Florida for years.

Along with two representative guidebooks that portray visitors and potential visitors as manly and industrious, *A Winter in Florida* (1869) and *Guide to Florida* (1975), this analysis includes a third guidebook, Sidney Lanier's *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate and History*, a somewhat subversive postbellum Florida guidebook that strays from the popular characterizations of the state and its tourists. Including Lanier's guide in this study provides a contrast that further distinguishes how

guidebooks' characterizations of their audience are key in setting up how Florida as a destination was imagined and approached by Northerners in the postbellum era. The guidebooks suggested to readers ways they might construct themselves as tourists, promoting specific character traits to try on in the making of their own self-as-traveler.

Self-representation and tourism are ideas often brought together, from scholarship in tourism studies (like the article "Traveling the World: Identity and Travel Biography" in *Annals of Tourism Research*) to conversations in popular media (like *Jezebel's* "How to Talk about Your Travels without Sounding like a Dick"). Self-representation and tourism can also be considered in terms of rhetorical ethos. While ethos is casually understood as a rhetor's character, this classical appeal operates much more broadly. The Aristotelian concept of rhetorical ethos as virtue, good sense, and good will built through discourse considered together with the Isocratean focus on the rhetor's community reputation allows ethos to be seen as dynamic amalgamations of self, place, and community negotiated

through texts. For instance, our sense of Walt Disney World relies on the advertisements we see and our experiences visiting the parks, but it also comes from the stories we tell one another about our experiences and the ways we approach the Disney brand. All of these elemental variables can play more or less of a role in the cultural construction of Disney World: printed marketing material is part of the ethos construction.

With such a fluid understanding of ethos, the concept can be applied in a network of impressions in postbellum Florida travel guides. If writer, reader, and Florida itself are characterized through ethos, then it is entirely possible for the text to shape identities, perspectives, and actions. So, the self-representation that might apply to the guidebook's author works in a transaction with reader and place, resulting in ethos constructed across multiple entities. Lanier's guide demonstrates how, when such a transaction is not constructed in the text, the audience can remain distanced from the guidebook and the destination. This means that constructing an ethos that merges author and audience in community of

action is key in creating a rhetorically active guidebook that serves the purposes of the travel industry. In the analysis that follows, postbellum Florida guidebooks are placed in conversation with each other. This inter-textual dialogue demonstrates on the one hand an ethotic network that posits Florida as wilderness and the guide's reader as manly, capable, and adventuresome. On the other hand, taking these books together illuminates an ethotic breakdown where individual authorial ethos eclipses the opportunity for collective character building and merges place, author, and reader.

The Guidebooks

This article considers Florida travel and ethos as constructed through three travel guides: *A Winter in Florida* (1869), *Guide to Florida* (1975), and *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate and History* (1876). These guidebooks were selected from more than twenty postbellum Florida guidebooks available through the HathiTrust digital library. I chose these particular guidebooks for four key reasons: 1) they contain

extensive narrative passages rather than just bulleted facts, 2) the authors claim they have traveled in Florida, 3) the texts were popular for Northern audiences, each going through multiple editions, and 4) they focus exclusively on travel in Florida, rather than travel through the South. These guides vary in terms of the role of represented author and audience. The first two fit into the larger conversation of Florida as wild and guidebook readers as industrious, adventuring sportsmen (Revels 2011, 27; Youngs 2005). Lanier's *Florida*, in its differing construction of the Florida environment and his approach to authorship, illustrates an ethotic gap that leaves readers outside of the travel perspective.

A Winter in Florida and *Guide to Florida* both construct an audience ethos of industrious adventurers through repeated emphasis on beautiful, untouched landscapes, and absent or incapable locals. The first guide, Ledyard Bill's *A Winter in Florida*, was published by the New York-based company Wood & Hollbrook in 1869. The first-person narrative guide is a volume of more than 200 pages, dedicated to

providing both historical and contemporary descriptions of Florida. Through its 15 chapters, *A Winter in Florida* details Florida's history of European colonization, including conflicts among various European settlers and native populations. The guide also narrates Bill's own experience in the state, illustrating his visits to Jacksonville and St. Augustine as well as his voyage down the St. Johns River. Bill's guide remained popular for many years and is mentioned in Florida travelers' writings, including Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Palmetto Leaves*. The second guidebook considered is the *Guide to Florida* a project written by Luther L. Holden under the pseudonym "The Rambler" (Rinhart and Rinhart 1986, 203). *Guide to Florida* was inexpensively printed and sold by The American News Company and subsidized by advertisers from the travel industry (Patrick 1964, v). Like *A Winter in Florida*, the Rambler's *Guide* offers an overview of Florida's multinational colonial history and gives firsthand accounts of eastern Florida's most notable destinations. Multiple editions of the *Guide to Florida* were published through the

1870s, the first appearing in 1873. Two years later a near-identical edition was published, with two additional pages of text. In 1876 a third edition of the guide was produced. The content was unchanged from the 1875 edition I refer to in this analysis, but the later physical guide itself was altered, printed with new smaller font that shrunk the size of the volume, making it easier to carry but less readable (v).

The third guide, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate and History* was written by a former confederate soldier, linguist, poet, and musician Sidney Lanier. His guide rejects recurring postbelum travel tropes of Florida as a beautiful empty landscape, as well as the reader/author connection evident in the two guidebooks described above. Instead, Lanier populates Florida with locals and portrays himself in opposition to the Northern travelers he observes through his journey. The ethos—the role—he constructs for himself is one of critical humorist, a rhetorical stance that neither engages his audience as potential travelers nor constructs a role for them. The 1876 *Florida* edition considered here is a

reprint of the 1875 first edition with an added appendix. Lanier's 336-page volume includes the author's narrated travel experiences in Florida as well as statistical information on climate, agriculture, and transportation. Like *A Winter in Florida* (1869), *Guide to Florida* (1975), *Florida* was also subsidized by the travel industry, ending with pages of advertisements. An important distinction, however, between the two more traditional guidebooks and *Florida* is that Lanier was a well-known writer who outwardly expressed his disdain for his own guidebook, calling it "hack work" and labeling himself as "Poet-in-Ordinary to a long line of railroad operations" (as qtd. in Revels 2011, 28). His bitterness for the task is evident in the guidebook itself, as Lanier is the only author who draws attention to the constructedness of a guidebook and challenges the work of the travel guide genre. Lanier's subversive commentary serves as a contrast to the more conventional guidebooks that combine a vivid description of wild Florida with an implicit characterization of Florida travelers as an adventuresome group, courageous enough to brave Florida's

exotic hazards. The gap of audience-based ethos constructed in Lanier's guide serves to highlight the presence of the audience ethos constructed in the other guidebooks.

The Conventional Guidebooks: Wild Florida and Busy Sportsmen

Audience ethos is a central rhetorical construct in the two conventional guidebooks. In these more traditional guidebooks, native Florida residents are generally portrayed as inept service providers, or—more often—not depicted at all. The absence of a local population's positive or industrious character traits invites readers to form an unfettered relationship with Florida for themselves. These readers are invited to see Florida as a place ripe for Northern intervention, even Northern correction, giving readers a sense of agency as they work through the travel narratives.

One way in which the local population fades away, promoting the central engagement of the Northern audience to Florida, is through personifications of Florida. When Florida is personified as a beleaguered

victim, this image replaces the concept of an actual living Florida population. *A Winter in Florida*, for example, personifies Florida as a female victim of circumstances. Bill traces the state's history, defending Florida's confederate involvement in the Civil War fifteen years after obtaining statehood: "But poor, harassed Florida was not long to enjoy either peace or prosperity. . . . this State, with others, was by fraud and violence carried out of the union" (70). This portrait of a victimized Florida being carried away is used to reflect a hope for the state's recovery, an "inauguration of a prolonged and flourishing period which time has in store for her" (70). The personification of Florida here as a victimized female corrects Northern perceptions of the state as a place full of Confederate rebels. This rhetorical trick works to reduce potential threat and, through metaphor, avoids discussion of mindset or motive of the actual Florida residents. Rather than mediating relationships with existing inhabitants, readers are able to position themselves directly in relation to a Florida that appears as a non-

threatening entity they could be enlisted to abstractly save.

When actual local inhabitants are discussed in the conventional guidebooks, they appear in the role of incompetent service providers. Bill criticizes one pair of Florida hotel proprietors as “opposed to improvements, and seemingly to every enterprise as well as to their own interests” and another local proprietor as a “lazy and incompetent young man” (99, 157). The incompetence of these Floridians who venture into business provides a rationale for readers to imagine themselves in control of the place, as knowledgeable, industrious individuals who can, through the disclosures of the guidebook authors, make more out of Florida. Likewise, *The Rambler’s Guide to Florida* criticizes local character, noting the lack of self-control exhibited by local excursion guides: “The great trouble with many of the guides is their inordinate fondness for liquor” (141). Such evaluative comments demonstrate that, along with encountering a non-threatening personified Florida, guidebook readers encounter a local

population to which they can feel morally superior.

Besides descriptions of a few Florida cities, which Bill and Holden populate more with Northern visitors than local inhabitants (of St. Augustine, Bill notes “[t]he fashionable belle of Newport and Saratoga, and the pale, thoughtful, and furloughed clergyman of New England, were at all points encountered”), the state is generally described as void of any human activity. Descriptions of Florida being suspended in time, a primordial Eden, and a post-apocalyptic site of decay render the landscape in a way that a reader can enter the landscape, imaginatively or in actuality, without disrupting any residual local inhabitants. The Rambler, for example, presents boating on the Ocklawaha River as a hauntingly empty scene: “waving streamers of Spanish moss, which here and there, in great festoons of fifty feet in length, hung down like tattered but gigantic banners, worm-eaten and moldy, sad evidences of the hopes and passions of the distant past” (124). Bill superimposes Florida’s geo-historical past on its contemporary state: “by

savage wars and the desolation and destruction of towns and missions and plantations, together with the changes in government, the transformation has been made complete, and now the original wilderness everywhere covers the State, and as nearly primeval as in the time of Adam" (152-153). These resounding images of Florida as an abandoned expanse of wilderness, together with the passages that discount the existing local inhabitants as abstract or incompetent invite Northerners to take charge of and reshape Florida's culture and landscape.

The negative evaluations of locals stand in contrast to the vote of confidence the guidebooks give the audience to take action in developing the Florida wilderness. In *A Winter in Florida*, for example, Bill points out that Northern-led agriculture in Florida shows great promise: "A few industrious Yankees have already initiated the enterprise of early gardening, and there is not a shadow of doubt as to the result" (191). The guidebooks' Northern audience is able to identify with the "industrious Yankees" rather than the "lazy and incompetent" local, a position that

allows them to share in the valuable potential of Florida and share in a characterization of industriousness. Bill also directly compares Northern accommodations to Florida accommodations, highlighting the higher Northern standard and the opportunity for Northern improvement in the Florida travel industry: "a more splendid opportunity never seemed to present itself. . . . a respectable mechanic's and clerk's boarding-house at the North is, in most respects, [St. Augustine hotels'] superior" (168). Holden sees a yet unrealized opportunity in Jacksonville to revive the cotton industry: "at present, the strange spectacle is presented of an important sea-port, the natural outlet of the product of an enormous extent of the finest cotton-fields in the South, doing comparatively nothing in the great staple" (87). These statements dismiss the abilities of the local population and tailor a vision of the hardworking, capable Northern tourist-entrepreneur, inviting the audience to adopt these ethotic characteristics with authority and an eye to action as they approach Florida.

Along with the opportunity to exercise a reader's industriousness, the conventional guidebooks' descriptions of Florida as a mostly empty wilderness provide readers the opportunity to acquire an ethos of masculine adventuring. The guidebooks' frequent descriptions of uninhabited lands where wildlife abounds builds Florida's image as a wilderness. The guidebooks' readers, entering this environment imaginatively or, perhaps, in reality, are invited to position themselves as explorers in a wild, untamed land where hunting, fishing, and camping are acknowledged as the only possible ways to encounter Florida.

The traditional guidebooks dedicated much space to descriptions of hunting and fishing, emphasizing the wealth of opportunity in these activities. Florida was promoted as a site for great fishing and hunting through various media, which drew visitors from the Midwest, Northeast, and other countries (Youngs 2005). The conventional guidebooks focus extensively on descriptions of the land and suggestions for how the audience should engage it. The reader of these guidebooks acquires the ethos of a

adventuresome sportsman because of the way the authors frame their narratives of hunting and fishing with specific details that read as advice. For instance, the Rambler provides tips for killing alligators: "they possess a vulnerable point, which is just in front of the spot where the huge head works upon the spinal column" (120). Readers are able to share in Bill's alligator hunting description as he identifies the group of hunters around him as "visitors, who, fresh from Northern snows and ice, take to the fun with a rare relish" (143). He notes that sunny weather is best for alligator hunting and suggests shooting the alligator in the forearm, so that the animal's head—or teeth-- can be retrieved as a trophy. (144). The guidebooks speak of alligator hunting with obvious gusto, void of squeamishness or apology, assuming the readers will embrace the dangerous sport and take the advice to heart as potential travelers ready to engage in such manly Florida adventures. What is understood in these conventional guidebooks is that readers can become agents in the shaping of an un-made state: they can imagine themselves as the kind of

traveler who manages hotels or hunts alligators; as adventurers and developers, they are invited to take advantage of a passive, un-tamed Florida that waits for them.

The Subversive Guidebook: An Impoverished Florida and Uninspired Tourists

Lanier's subversive guidebook, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate, and History* refuses to position readers in this opportunistic way. Lanier's book does not invite the reader to accept his vision of Florida. Instead he populates Florida's interior with real people and draws attention to the guidebook as a constructed barrier between himself and his readers. The lack of audience ethos created in this guidebook results in a lack of author-guided action for the audience to take as they approach Florida.

The conventional guidebooks open a space for their readers to occupy Florida and thus create an ethotic relationship with it by dismissing the presence or value of current Florida residents. Lanier does not offer such possibilities to his readership. The Florida he presents includes residents,

not as incompetent service providers as the other guides do, but as disenfranchised locals. *Florida* includes a story about a "sandy-whiskered native" conversing with the steamboat skipper on the Ocklawaha River, the banks of which are described as primordial, wild, and uninhabited in the conventional guidebooks. Lanier recounts the unhappy exchange he witnesses during an excursion down the river. The whole of the scene reveals the local's struggle to meet basic survival needs. Lanier writes that the native local was, he suspected, a "vanilla-gatherer" -- someone who collected a mock-tobacco plant leaf indigenous to the area to trade with steamboat captains for necessities. This man was disappointed to find that the captain had not brought him any tobacco. Lanier then quotes, in its entirety, a letter penned by the vanilla-gatherer: "Deer Sir, I send you one back Verneller, pleeze fetch one par of shus numb 8 and e fenny over fetch twelve yards hoamspin. Yrs truly & c." (32). This informal case study of the local population is perhaps just as unflattering as the conventional guidebooks' descriptions of

incompetent local service providers, but Lanier's differs in that it positions the local population as invested, however grimly, in their own affairs rather than in the business of serving the Northern tourists. Lanier's Florida is not an empty and available wilderness, then, but the home of a population struggling for survival.

Lanier does not comment on the competence or morality of the "sandy-whiskered native" and other locals, but does evaluate the behavior of tourists in a manner not seen in the conventional guidebooks. For instance, his descriptions of fellow tourists are often comic and critical, as he finds them to be intensely focused on eating:

At this hour of the morning in Jacksonville everybody is eating his ante-breakfast oranges, with as much vigor as if he saw himself growing suddenly wrinkled and flaccid, like the gods and goddesses in Wagner's *Rheingold* when they had in their agitation forgotten to eat their daily allowance of the golden fruit which grew in Freya's garden and which was the necessary condition of their immortal youth. (77-78)

In this instance and others, Lanier pokes fun at tourist behavior in a way

that isolates him from the tourists he travels with and the potential tourists reading his guidebook.

This valuative commentary on tourists is extended in Lanier's description of gathering alligator souvenirs, which stands in contrast to the conventional guides' narratives of alligator hunting. While Bill and Holden illustrate alligator hunting in Florida as an exhilarating adventure, Lanier describes the alligator teeth as a purchased commodity, indicating that travelers to Florida are more likely to purchase alligator teeth from vendors than they are to shoot an alligator and extract its teeth themselves. Lanier explains that alligator teeth for sale are acquired by this somewhat grotesque practice: "I was told that the process of gathering the teeth was simply to shoot the animal, leave the carcass lying for a couple of months, and then revisit it and draw the loosened teeth from their sockets" (83). Lanier's inclusion of alligator teeth as a tourist commodity omits the image of sportsmanship and camaraderie, unlike the hunting scenes in other guides, and leaves readers with no desirable character

attribute with which to construct their traveler ethos.

In fact, the camaraderie that Bill and Holden build with their audience through the frequent use of the first person plural and the sharing of hunting tips seems to be mocked by Lanier, rendering different rhetorical results. For instance, when Lanier does use the first person plural to refer to himself and his fellow tourists, it is to indicate their collective isolation and his own social awkwardness. After observing a waterfowl's peculiar way of eating, Lanier notes:

But I make no doubt he would have thought us as absurd as we him if he could have seen us taking *our* breakfast a few minutes later: for as we sat there, some half-dozen men at table, all that sombre melancholy which comes over the American at his meals descended upon us; no man talked, each of us could hear the other crunch his bread *in faucibus*, and the noise thereof seemed in the ghostly stillness like the noise of earthquakes and of crashing worlds; even the furtive glances towards each other's plates were presently awed down to a sullen gazing of each into his own: the silence increased, the noises became intolerable, a cold sweat broke out over at least one of us,

he felt himself growing insane, and rushed out to the deck with a sigh as of one saved from a dreadful death by social suffocation. (22)

In the passage above, the first-person plural shifts into a distant third person as Lanier moves from describing a shared discomfort to, presumably, explaining in a disconnected formal style his own reaction to the uncomfortable breakfast scene. The lack of connection here between Lanier and his fellow travelers translates to a lack of shared ethos between Lanier and his readers who, through their act of reading the travel guidebook, would find the travelers described in the text as surrogates for themselves.

Lanier also seems to mock the work of the conventional guidebooks in his own version of providing travel tips for his readers. While the hunting tips offered by Bill and Holden construct a shared ethos of hardy sportsmen, the particularity of the tips Lanier offers pushes advice to the realm of absurd. It is advice that cannot be applied reasonably to anyone's ethos or to any logical action. For example, Lanier claims to

know the single spot in a river
steamboat where a passenger can
stretch:

Know, therefore, tired friend that shall hereafter ride up the Ocklawaha on the Marion—whose name I would fain call Legion—that if you will place a chair just in the narrow passage-way which runs alongside the cabin, at the point where this passage-way descends by a step to the open space in front of the pilot-house, on the left-hand side facing to the bow, you will perceive a certain slope in the railing where it descends by an angle of some thirty degrees to accommodate itself to the step aforesaid; and this slope should be in such a position as that your left leg unconsciously stretches itself along the same by the pure insinuating solicitations of the fitness of things, and straightway dreams itself off into an Elysian tranquillity [*sic*]. You should then tip your chair in a slightly diagonal position back to the side of the cabin, so that your head will rest there against, your right arm will hang over the chair-back, and your left arm will repose on the railing. I give no specific instruction for your right leg, because I am disposed to be liberal in this matter and to leave some gracious scope for personal idiosyncrasies as well as a margin of allowance for the accidents of time and place; dispose your right

leg, therefore, as your heart may suggest, or as all the precedent forces of time and the universe may have combined to require you. (23)

The suggestion Lanier offers here is outwardly comic, conjuring an obviously humorous vision of someone attempting to take his advice on stretching. Equally witty is his allowance to “leave some gracious scope for personal idiosyncrasies” by not dictating where the travelers should place their right legs. The overwrought specificity of the author’s advice renders the whole passage a parody, clearly dissuading readers to become someone who might actually use the suggestion while inviting them to enjoy the humor. Additionally, the passage implicitly criticizes the whole Florida tourist experience. Referring to potential travelers as Legion invokes a mass of tourists all participating in the same inevitable sight-seeing activity of touring the Ocklawaha by steamboat. Focusing so extensively on the careful maneuvering it takes to stretch oneself invokes an image of the river steamer as cramped and uncomfortable. Such description works against the conventional guidebooks’

focus on Florida as a wilderness and Florida travelers as adventuresome: it denies the illusion that the tourist is going where no others have been.

Finally, *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate and History* is able to negate the possibility of constructing a desirable ethos for readers and even subverts the travel industry's objective for subsidized guidebooks. Lanier accomplishes this through establishing a meta-awareness of the genre of travel literature. At times, Lanier's attention to conventions and tropes in Florida guidebooks seems to serve the purpose of distinguishing his own work from the lesser work of others. He disparages travel writing produced without thorough first-hand research: "it is not in clever newspaper paragraphs, it is not in chatty magazine papers, it is not in guidebooks written while the cars are running, that the enormous phenomenon of Florida is to be disposed of" (12). Such claims work to mitigate the earnestness with which readers approach many guidebooks. Yet, while he criticizes the "many hysterical utterances which have been made touching the tropical ravishments and paradisiacal glories

of Florida," his guide is prone to exaggerated descriptions of the landscape as well (15). For instance, in an account of journeying through a cypress swamp, Lanier introduces a litany of metaphorical imagery that draws attention to itself through its extensiveness and diversity. In the space of less than two pages, Lanier compares elements of the cypress swamp to nuns in a church aisle, young girls wearing wreaths and dancing, various pieces of parlor furniture, architectural structures, women's tresses, musical instruments, geographical features, real and fantastical animals, characters from literature and myth, biblical figures, historic events, and the stock exchange. He ends the fantastical metaphorical tour with confident finality: "It is a green dance of all things and all times" (27-28). The majesty Lanier bestows upon the Florida landscape could be categorized as one of the "hysterical utterances" he deplores. The push to emulate in his own text what he criticizes in others hints toward parody. But this technique also allows the text to function as a hypermediated experience, rather than function as a

transparent window through which readers may enter a material place. Readers are thus barred from imagining themselves entering the scene, as their attention is drawn to the act of reading a text.

A culminating point for this hypermediation occurs when Lanier pauses his travel narration and considers his use of literary device:

The Grand National and the St. James are open only during the winter; and when we came along back this way in the late spring we found rough planks barring their hospitalities up—a clear case, in fact, of roses shutting and being buds again. Of course, one feels that this simile needs justification; for a hotel is a *prima facie* not like a rose: but what would you have? This is Florida, and a simile will live vigorously in Florida which would perish outright in your cold carping clime." (69-70)

Lanier here—and elsewhere—draws attention to the craftedness of his text, and thus the craftedness of his version of Florida, which prevents readers from establishing what could be felt as an authentic connection with the place of Florida. Lanier's prose may work as parody of the guidebook genre as well as a meta-aware commentary on the position of a

guidebook reader. Lanier's prose seems *not* to work as a conventional guidebook capable of constructing the author-place-audience relationship needed to fashion a role for his audience and entice the reader to adopt a perspective and course of action for traveling to Florida.

Conclusion

Despite these assumptions, Lanier's text has mainly been treated as a conventional guidebook, if not necessarily a strong one, both in its contemporary context and in ours. Tracy Revels (2011) notes that the text did not have much reception of any kind upon publication and was described in one nineteenth century review as "uneasy and sometimes brilliant;" she herself describes the guidebook as "competent" (28). Others have referenced it in various studies of Florida travel without commenting on its seeming subversive characteristics (Lowe 2011; Thulesius 2001; Youngs 2005). Perhaps the ability of *Florida: Its Scenery, Climate and History* to pass as a somewhat standard guidebook, despite its fantastical and absurd

elements, attests to the touch of magic readers have allowed to define Florida, however they may be positioned as travelers and potential travelers—perhaps simile that does not work elsewhere truly does work when describing Florida, as Lanier claims. Or, perhaps the successful convention-breaking of Lanier might be a wider phenomenon to study. At the least, this article’s case study suggests that guidebooks can factor into a destination’s ethos through various author-audience relationships.

Examining postbellum guidebooks, both conventional and subversive, can be entertaining, with their hyperbolic descriptions and intended and sometimes unintended humor. The significance of such an exercise is

evidenced by focusing on the relationships between author, audience, and place. Authors build rapport with their audience through crafted descriptions of place that help construct a reader ethos. Readers can then adopt this ethos in their perception of a place, which can affect how they approach and act within this place. As we scour various texts and images in our contemporary tourist climate, we should maintain an awareness about who is constructing our own traveler-ethos, how this construct might frame the places we inhabit and visit, and consequently how it might influence how we experience those places.

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