

### A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond

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## Review

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**Harrison, Kimberly, ed.** *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond*. Louisiana State University Press, \$45.00 cloth ISBN 807131431

A Southern Woman's Diary

Revealing the Personal Side of the Civil War Experience

Priscilla Bond's diary is remarkable not for her representations of the Civil War, or of Terrebonne Parish where she made her home as a new bride just before 1861, but instead due to how her writing gives us a glimpse into the mentality of a white middle class southern woman shaped by the Second Great Awakening. While Bond used her journal to keep track of the minuti of her daily life such as visits from friends and bouts of illness—Bond was a chronic consumptive, eventually succumbing to the disease in 1865 at the age of 27—she devoted a great deal of energy wrestling with matters of spirituality. In fact, Bond devotes far more space to her constant attempts to become a better Christian than to her courtship. At any rate, readers should not come to Bond's diary expecting a true-life version of *Gone with the Wind*, as they will be bitterly disappointed. Instead, the experience of reading her diary is more similar to talking with someone in real life where we might pass the time with a neighbor, chatting pleasantly about people we both knew or the weather, without any conscious attempt to link the subject matter to any larger frame of reference.

What is most intriguing about Bond's journal is not so much what was included, but what must have been left out. In the 21st century, we are so accustomed to perfect strangers sharing their most intimate moments on the internet, or whose family squabbles are the subject matter of reality television. Kimberly Harrison's lengthy introduction to Bond's journal fills in the lacuna of what is missing in her work. For example, Bond did not get along very well with her mother-in-law, but a modern reader more than likely might not completely understand the rancor in this relationship as she never writes venomous passages

about her in her journal. Instead, Bond's dislike is demonstrated more through understatement and distance than through harsh words.

But what really makes Bond's journal intriguing is Harrison's lengthy introduction and copious notes and appendices. Harrison's essay places Bond's life into context for modern readers, with brief but very informative explanations of everything from courtship rituals to medical practices of the day. An appendix describing Bond's friends and family mentioned in the journal as well as judicious footnoting of the actual text make it difficult to get lost in the author's personal world. Harrison and her editors at LSU Press should be commended for choosing to use footnotes, rather than endnotes, which, alas, have become the standard in academic writing. Footnotes provide the reader with immediate access to the reference, whereas endnotes are cumbersome notation devices requiring the reader to flip back and forth through the book to access this information. And since modern computer technology has made it easier than ever to make footnotes, the decision of publishers to continue to opt to use is flabbergasting. All in all, Harrison's editing of Bond's papers has transformed them into an informative and accessible window on the past for the lay scholar.

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