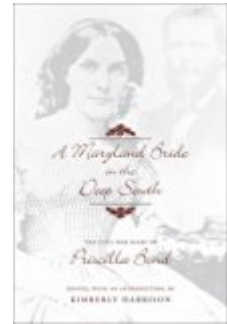


Priscilla Bond. *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond.* Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006. xvi + 384 pp. \$45.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8071-3143-5.

Reviewed by Jennifer Newman Trevino (Department of History, Auburn University)
Published on H-CivWar (December, 2006)



A Woman's War

In the past few decades we have seen an abundance of scholarship that illustrates the importance of women during the American Civil War. Analytical works such as George C. Rable's *Civil Wars: Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (1989), and Drew Gilpin Faust's *Mothers of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (1996), provide insight into the lives of women during this period. Another approach has been to allow historical figures to speak for themselves by publishing the entirety of their writings, as exemplified by the diary of Mary Chesnut edited by C. Vann Woodward (1981). Kimberly Harrison's edited diary of Priscilla Bond is a brilliant addition to the latter historiography. Harrison notes that although historians Drew Gilpin Faust, in *Mothers of Invention*, and Eugene Genovese, in *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (1972), both cite Bond's diary, this is the first time it has appeared in its entirety in print. Harrison points to the significance of the diary because of its extensive scope as well as the unique perspective provided by Bond. Kept from 1858 through 1865, the diary records not only the war years, but also those directly leading up to its outbreak.

Bond's diary reflects themes of religion, kinship networks, and slavery that are common to women's diaries during this period. Harrison's introduction situates Bond's experience in the context of not only other diarists of her time, but also of recent historiography, pointing out where it strengthens or challenges the conclusions of other historians. Bond's decision to marry,

for example, strengthens the findings of historians such as Jane Censer Turner (*North Carolina Planters and Their Children, 1800-1860* [1984]), who has argued that Southern planters raised their children to be independent autonomous social actors. Bond's situation further suggests that Turner's conclusions might apply to non-planter elites as well. Bond's parents did not attempt to influence her decision to marry Howard Bond. Indeed the majority of the first portion of her diary concerns Bond's inner struggle with her sincere desire that God would direct her to make the right choice regarding her marriage.

Religion played a crucial role in Bond's life at other times. It provided a source of comfort to Bond as she battled tuberculosis; figured prominently in her everyday decisions; and played a role in the formation of her identity. Bond struggled with redefinition not only as she attempted to conform to what she believed was her duty as a wife in the turmoil of war, but also as she faced the differences in culture as she moved from her home in Maryland to that of her husband's family in Louisiana. That experience further provides the insights of a woman who turned to her diary as her confidant, as many women of the time did. Bond clearly relied upon kinship networks as well. Yet Harrison maintains that Bond's experience challenges the argument that women relied exclusively upon female kinship networks by noting both her male and female friends.

Transplanted to a foreign and what Bond perceived as a somewhat hostile environment, she found herself dis-

connected. Born and raised in Maryland, she grew up in predominantly white society that relied mainly upon hired black workers rather than slave laborers. Although Maryland was a slave state, the majority of slave-owners held few slaves. This presented a stark contrast to the plantation culture of Louisiana. There she encountered the harsh realities of slavery as her father-in-law presented a figure of cruelty to slaves best personified by Simon Legree of Harriet Beecher Stowe's, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852). At first, Bond opposed the manner in which her father-in-law treated his slaves. Yet as time progressed, the fear of slave insurrections caused her paternalistic concern for the welfare of slaves to grow fainter. She was hardly acclimated to her new life and family, when the course of the war caused her to again be uprooted after her husband was involved in a raid in 1862 during which two Union soldiers were killed. Bond related her horror at the insistence of Northern soldiers that they search the house for her husband after that raid. If that was not bad enough, she then witnessed the destruction of his property by those same soldiers.

It was at this point that she began to perceive the deterioration of traditional male and female roles. She fled to Texas with her husband's family. His involvement in the Confederate war effort meant that he was rarely home, which even further challenged Bond's conformity to her image of her role as a wife. Throughout the turmoil of her move, the Civil War, separation from her family and husband (for various lengths of time), and her constant battle with tuberculosis, Bond consistently put her "trust in a Higher Power," whom she believed would not forsake her (p. 196). Religion provided a constant source of strength and comfort. Her move to Louisiana removed her from her Methodist church since she joined the Presbyterian church, to which her husband belonged. While this was not too hard of a transition, she frequently

commented on the stark contrast between her religious beliefs and the large number of Catholic inhabitants in her new state. As the war progressed, however, her intolerance for what she perceived as the odd customs of the Catholics became less intense as she became more tolerant of religious beliefs that differed from the ones she held.

Bond's diary also illustrates the way in which the war became all consuming and indeed politicized some women. During the first portion of her diary she is concerned with the immediate events surrounding her life, which include everything from church to visiting, to her intense desire to become a better Christian and improve her moral standing. As the war begins to take shape, Bond records events that were taking place on a national level. While her sympathies remained with the Confederacy, by the middle of the war she longed for peace on any terms. She also recorded the major military battles as she heard of them. Although Bond is not always correct in her information, such as her belief that the battle of "Bull's Run, and Manasses" were two separate battles fought in 1861, Harrison's notes correct and clarify Bond's mistakes (p. 203).

Harrison's approach to this edited volume is commendable. The introduction not only demonstrates extensive research, but also provides enough background information to fill in the gaps in Bond's diary so that it presents a coherent narrative of her life during the war. By providing an overview of "Principal Friends and Family" as well as "Frequently Mentioned Places," Harrison allows for a quick point of reference to the many characters mentioned. Harrison's excellent command of the literature and judicious editing make this book an excellent addition to the recent historical scholarship on women during the Civil War.

If there is additional discussion of this review, you may access it through the network, at:

<https://networks.h-net.org/h-civwar>

Citation: Jennifer Newman Trevino. Review of Bond, Priscilla, *A Maryland Bride in the Deep South: The Civil War Diary of Priscilla Bond*. H-CivWar, H-Net Reviews. December, 2006.

URL: <http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=12636>

Copyright © 2006 by H-Net, all rights reserved. H-Net permits the redistribution and reprinting of this work for nonprofit, educational purposes, with full and accurate attribution to the author, web location, date of publication, originating list, and H-Net: Humanities & Social Sciences Online. For any other proposed use, contact the Reviews editorial staff at hbooks@mail.h-net.msu.edu.