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Amy L. Wink, ed. *Tandem Lives: The Frontier Texas Diaries of Henrietta Baker Embree and Tennessee Keys Embree, 1856-1884.* Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 2009. 448 pp. $56.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-1-57233-504-2.

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Quiet Voices: Diaries of Frontier Southern Women

Diaries are delights for historians, especially those who study women. In *Tandem Lives*, editor Amy Wink presents a rare find of two related diaries, one written by Henrietta Baker Embree and another by Tennessee Keys Embree, sequential wives of Dr. John Embree of Bell County, Texas. Although Henrietta and Tennessee never knew one another, they shared the same space and knew many of the same people. Neither woman held a significant position of power or married a man found in history texts. Instead, both quietly lived their lives fulfilling their expected roles of mother, daughter, sister, and wife to the best of their ability–making them representative of many southern white middle-class women of the mid-nineteenth century.

Tandem Lives is divided into three chronological sections: Henrietta's diary, Tennessee's journal of 1862 written before her marriage to Embree, and her diary after their marriage. Spanning 1856 to 1884, with several gaps, the Embree diaries provide useful information on a variety of subjects, including gender roles within family and community; female relationships between mothers, sisters, children, slaves, and servants; addiction; the day-to-day tasks of a frontier doctor's wife; religion and piety; white female views of the Civil War, Reconstruction, and the Indian frontier; and the evolution of personal identity and the protection of agency within a difficult marriage. Both diarists wrote to a named audience, Henrietta to her sister Jen and Tennessee to her daughter Beulah, to whom they expected the diaries would be given after their deaths. Neither woman wrote with the expectation of privacy.

The first journal shows the monotony and hardships endured by a young woman living on the Texas frontier. Born in 1834 in Cumberland County, Kentucky, Henrietta Baker married Dr. John Embree when she was eighteen years old. Not long after (how long is unclear), the couple moved to Bell County in central Texas, where they had three children. Henrietta began her journal on January 1, 1856, in an unsuccessful effort to overcome addiction and generally improve herself. She wrote several "vows," dated 1861 and 1862, at the end of her journal in which she pledged her desire to limit or stop using tobacco, opiates, morphine, and snuff, as well as "bridal [*sic*]" her temper toward her family (p. 115).

Throughout Henrietta's entries, she recounted the day's events, making frequent notes of sickness, sewing, visiting and having visitors, and her moods, which were often noted as "gloomy" or having the "blues" (pp. 9, 58). Like many women of her class, she seemed prone to headaches and frequently complained of neuralgia (pain of a sensory nerve), which may have led to her addictions. Not surprisingly, religion, specifically evangelical Protestantism, informed her daily life. She often made a point to mark the Sabbath, note when she read the Bible, and record the subject of Sunday sermons. In addition, her entries seem heavily burdened with anxiety about the afterlife, which stemmed from her desire to see in heaven her youngest daughter, Mollie, who died at the age of four months in 1856. Henrietta wrote daily in 1856, once in 1857, skipped 1858, returned to daily entries in 1859, fell off quickly after March of 1860, renewed her journal early in 1861, and then wrote little more. In 1862, she wrote her last two entries, in which she described her poor health and continued worries about the afterlife. Despite the oncoming war, Henrietta failed to write about national politics beyond a mention of Harper's Ferry. She did, however, write about nearby Indian attacks and frontier defense, including the 1859 Riggs massacre and local defense preparation amidst calls for extermination. Henrietta died in 1863 at the age of twenty-nine.

Considering the frequency with which Tennessee wrote over a long period of time, her diary might prove more useful to historians than Henrietta's, especially as

an example of patriarchy within a southern household. Dr. Embree married Tennessee Keys thirteen months after Henrietta died. Born in Arkansas in 1840, Tennessee's family moved to Bell County, Texas, when she was ten years old. She married Embree when she was twenty-four and raised his and Henrietta's only surviving child, Nattie–a role she was somewhat familiar with since she had been raised by a stepmother. The couple eventually had five children of their own. Tennessee began writing in her journal in 1862, before her marriage. Although short, the diary illustrates a young southern woman's perception and understanding of the Civil War as well as her daily life during wartime; however, it covers less than one year. Tennessee resumed journal writing a year after her marriage in 1865, making consistent entries until the birth of a son in late 1869. Afterward, she wrote less frequently, only a few times a year, as her family grew in number, until she stopped in 1883.

Not surprisingly, Tennessee's day-to-day concerns were remarkably similar to Henrietta's—sewing, child rearing, attention to the home and garden, relationships with servants, headaches, illness, desire to improve herself through prayer, visits, and having visitors. Like her predecessor, Tennessee complained of monotony, her husband's long and frequent absences, and impatience with her children and servants. Tennessee's daily entries focused more on her own daughter than her stepdaughter, who was frequently mentioned but rarely became the subject of the day's events until her youthful death in 1869.

As in many other women's diaries of the period, Tennessee's focus on her family and daily tasks provides a female's perspective on familial and household relationships in relation to power and gender roles. These relationships consumed Tennessee's day and her diary–what and for whom she sewed, when and for whom she cooked, how and why she prayed, and even why she wrote in her diary. She wrote in 1866, "My little daughter I notice all these things in my Journal in order for you to learn what is necessary to know in order to be a good house keeper. I wish you if you should live to marry to be useful to a husband not an expense for all house hold need sesities [necessities]" (p. 188). Tennessee lived to please those dear to her through her performance as wife and mother and noted when she achieved her goal, such as when her husband seemed happy with her dinner or a coat she had made for him. She also noted when she had not lived up to John's expectations, as when he "gave [her] a scolding … because [she] had not brushed his clothes" (p. 174). Early in their marriage, Tennessee occasionally voiced her displeasure with him, but more often she recorded her discontent quietly in her journal, perhaps because her husband's so-called scoldings sometimes went beyond a mere lecture. On one occasion, in 1868, Tennessee wrote without a note of shame of a conversation that her young daughter, Beulah, had had with a male visitor in which Beulah explained how her father dragged her mother "in a silk dress" because she wanted him to stop whipping Beulah (p. 325). The visitor and the doctor responded to the story with laughter, an unsurprising reaction considering the commonplaceness of corporal punishment in a culture only a few years removed from slavery.

Historians interested in relationships between white and black women during this transitional period between slavery and emancipation will find *Tandem Lives* filled with evidentiary gems given from a white mistress's point of view. Both Henrietta and Tennessee saw the presence of black women within the Embree household as both necessary and frustrating, feelings that often depended on how much control the two mistresses exerted over those who worked for them and how much leisure they gained as a result. Henrietta mentioned six slaves by name in her journals, usually in the context of sewing for them. On one occasion she beat a male slave, named Dink, with a broom, and on another she had her husband beat Aggie, a female house slave.

Of all the slaves owned by the Embrees before the war, Aggie was apparently the only one who worked in the Embree household after emancipation. Only the shadows of Aggie's life can be seen in the diaries. She was a good cook, made beautiful bread, had a keen sense of humor, and fared well with Dr. Embree's moods. She had children and married a man named George; Henrietta was unsure of the paternity of at least one of the children. The two women had children within a few months of one another, yet their daily lives both while pregnant and with newborns remained vastly different. While one cooked, cleaned, and cared for her child, the other sewed, nursed, and complained about having two infants in the house.

Tennessee's relationship with Aggie was brief, lasting only a few years, but little had changed in the relationship between white mistress and black servant, despite a change in mistress and the abolition of slavery. Tennessee felt somewhat dependent on Aggie (and her numerous replacements), a fact that made her worry in 1865 that Aggie might (and perhaps did) leave or gave her cause to complain when she had to cook because Aggie or the others had become too ill to work. After emancipation, Aggie lived in her own house on the Embree prop-

erty, but Tennessee never mentioned Aggie's children or husband. Her last appearance in Tennessee's diary refers to her being sick, but Tennessee did not record her death or the nature of her departure. According to Tennessee, Aggie left at a time when former slaves, particularly black men, faced considerable violence; several of Tennessee's entries note her husband attending to black people who had been shot. Although she disliked the violence, Tennessee had voiced her bitterness and discontent with running a household with "freed darkies," stating in 1865, "I would be glad when they all were gone" (p. 146).

A diarist herself, Wink has written previously about nineteenth-century women diarists. In *She Left Nothing in Particular: The Autobiographical Legacy of Nineteenth-Century Women's Diaries* (2001), she examined several, including the Embree diaries, and discussed female journal-writing as a tool of self-preservation and identity development during periods of difficulty. In the case of Henrietta and Tennessee Embree, she concentrated on their subjugation to an abusive patriarchal authority, as illustrated in the chapter title, "Narratives of Resistance: Negotiating Abuse and the Endangered Self." In *Tandem Lives*, however, Wink leaves the process of deciphering the abuse to the reader, only giving a single mention on the book cover's inside flap and subtle intimations in the introduction, where she calls John Embree "mercurial" as well as "complicated, perplexing, and pervasive" (p. xiii). She makes little mention of her previous use of the diaries out of a desire to let Henrietta and Tennessee speak for themselves and allow readers to come to their own conclusions.

Beyond a few spelling corrections for the sake of clarity, Wink has changed little in the rendition of the diaries available to her, a bound typescript created by a member of the Embree family. As Wink states, "What appears on those typescript pages is the story those women told themselves about their lives, that became the story their families told themselves about their mothers' lives, either by reading or editing their content" (p. xvi). Hence, the reader should assume that some changes were made to the manuscript diaries. As to the original journals, a direct descendent of Tennessee presented them to Wink as the book went to the publisher, leaving no time for her to make a direct comparison. Regardless, Wink pulled these quiet women's voices from obscurity and enhanced them with the necessary biographical information, photos, a useful timeline, and a family tree, so they can be heard for generations to come; she also created a companion Web site to the book, www.embreediaries.com. Anyone who enjoys reading history will find these diaries interesting; historians looking for a white female perspective on the mid-nineteenth century will find them invaluable.

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