



12-2017

Two Southern Women Writers: the Civil War Journals of Emily Jane Liles Harris and Mary Boykin Chesnut

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December, 2017

To the Dean of the Graduate School:

We are submitting a thesis written by Robert L. Wilson entitled, “Two Southern Women Writers: The Civil War Journals of Emily Jane Liles Harris and Mary Boykin Chesnut.”

We recommend acceptance in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in English.

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TWO SOUTHERN WOMEN WRITERS: THE CIVIL WAR JOURNALS OF
EMILY JANE LILES HARRIS AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT

A Thesis
Presented to the Faculty
Of the
College of Arts and Sciences
In Partial Fulfillment
Of the
Requirements for the Degree
Of
Master of Arts
In English
Winthrop University

December 2017

By

Robert L. Wilson

ABSTRACT

Through the examination of primary texts, along with appropriate secondary criticism, I argue that Southern women during the Civil War were not the mythological “Southern Belle” that they have often been portrayed as, but that they were intelligent, strong, and passionate writers. I examine the farm journal of Emily Jane Liles Harris and contrast it to the private journal kept by Mary Boykin Chesnut, to explore the role that education and literacy, writing, and authorial voice played in women’s lives during the War. Close attention to the role education and background played in the lives of these women, the uniqueness of their writing, and the level of agency of each woman will help scholars better understand life during this difficult time period. Finally, readers are given an insight (through the examination of primary texts) into the important role that journals, as a genre, play in the literary canon.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Foremost, I would like to thank my mother, Lisa Ann Wilson, and my grandmother, Carolyn Ann Benfield, for the amazing amount of support they have provided me throughout life. Without their love and dedication, I would not have made it this far in my educational pursuits.

Additionally, I would like to thank my thesis director, Dr. Kelly Richardson, Associate Professor of English at Winthrop University, for her amazing attention to detail and kindness in working with me on this amazing project. She is a true testament to what it means to be a teacher.

I would also like to acknowledge Jenni Harris, a descendent of Emily Jane Liles Harris, who graciously assisted me in locating the family cemetery. She also helped me locate the remains of the Harris plantation, and she provided the photos of Emily Harris and David Harris that are contained in this thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank my thesis readers, the faculty and staff, and my fellow students at Winthrop University who have encouraged, helped, and taught me that anything is possible through hard work and dedication.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE DIARY AND JOURNAL WRITING OF WOMEN IN THE AMERICAN SOUTH DURING THE CIVIL WAR

Humankind has documented its story through personal writing for centuries and some of the most intimate and personal moments of human beings have been chronicled in letters, diaries, and journals. The Civil War was no exception. Journal writing was instrumental in the American South during the Civil War; and while many of the narratives that have been read and studied from this era have often been those of men, women were also writing during this time period. In the last few decades, critical interest in studying these writings has grown, and scholars are discovering the vast amount of written material that women have composed. In fact, the stories that were written by women during this period often construct a picture of the South that is not always the idealized version that was portrayed by the writing of men from the same period, and the women narrating this story offer a complex understanding of the social structure with which they were contending. While men may have yielded the power of the sword, women were most certainly empowering themselves using their pens. In the diaries, letters, and journals of women, readers experience a unique perspective of life during the War. The untold stories of these women can expose a new narrative, and this becomes evident when readers hear from these women in their own voices via their writing.

Writing in a diary or journal was often a liberating experience for these women. While some were cognizant of the fact that their writing could be read, most of them would have chronicled personal stories and tales that would be hidden from

the world around them. This characteristic of a private audience led to these writings being very personal, detailed, and intimate. That is what leads readers to experience a unique perspective that is very different from what we have often been exposed to—namely the stereotypical view of women as “Southern Belles” that Hollywood, tradition, and even history books have at times handed down to us. It is the unique experience from the women themselves that allows readers to see history from those who lived it, rather than history from the perspective of those who attempt to interpret it.

I was first attracted to the personal writing of women in journals when I encountered the journal of Mary Boykin Chesnut. I had often read excerpts from her work entitled *A Diary from Dixie* while I was working as both an undergraduate and graduate student. Later, I realized that *A Diary from Dixie* was a revised version of an original journal that she kept during the Civil War and one that she intended to publish. Historian C. Vann Woodward published a more comprehensive version of the original journals entitled, *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*. The original journal was over four hundred pages and was contained in multiple volumes (Van Woodward 21). Vann Woodward also established that Chesnut had wanted to be a novelist and that she had edited the diary multiple times, and in 1886, she eventually settled on the form that was published as *A Diary from Dixie* in 1905. The edited version, which was shorter in length, was published by Isabella D. Martin and Myrta Lockett Avery—both of whom were friends of Chesnut's. The diary was extensively revised due to the sensitivity of the content (names, dates, and other details), and Chesnut's

connection to the people still living whom she had written about (Van Woodward 27-28).

The interaction that I had with Chesnut's journal led me to consider the tradition of journal writing and the desire to build upon that tradition, so I turned to the rich amount of archival material that is located in the Louis Pettus Archives at Winthrop University. While researching some of the available materials contained in the archives, I came upon the farm journals of Emily Jane Liles Harris. These journals had been left to the archives by Mrs. Harris Ford (a descendent of Harris) on May 14, 1984. I began to realize that there is a myriad of uncovered women's writing that was produced during the Civil War, but I was uniquely drawn to the writing of Emily Harris found in her farm journals. As I began to read and work with the Harris journals, I noticed that the journals were significantly different than the journal kept by Chesnut. Not only was the content of the writing different when compared to Chesnut, but the vocabulary, penmanship, and sentence structure were different as well. Despite the significant differences in each woman's journals, there are a few similarities that should be noted. Both journals discuss slavery, women's agency and authority, and both journals exhibit a striking level of vivid and descriptive writing.

Although the journals were written over one hundred and fifty years ago, I also wanted to consider the scholarship that has been written about journal writing of this period. While there was a movement in the 1980s to study women writers who wrote during the Civil War, which helped to bring about a wider conversation about the role of women during the Civil War, their writings, and the rhetorical nature of

these writings, very little scholarship has dealt with rural South Carolina women writers. We know that women were writing during the Civil War; but based on the scholarship that has been done, there is not a close examination and study of rural women who have not been published. As scholars have begun to uncover some of these hidden texts, readers are beginning to see a unique view into the untold stories of the Civil War—and many of the women who wrote them. An analysis of the overall discourse about Southern women writers and journal writing during the Civil War can be broken into four categories: the reliability of the content of the journals, the role of women and their feminization during the Civil War, the role that slavery played in the writing of women living during this time period, and the rhetorical purpose or strategy used in journal writing. By examining the different ways in which Harris and Chesnut fit within the current scholarship, we can begin to understand how writing played an important role in both of their lives.

The first area of discussion on journal writing by Southern women during the War can be focused on the reliability of the information contained in their journals. Because of the personal nature of journals and diaries, many scholars are divided on the issue of the effectiveness and accuracy of journal writing. While some writers were aware of the possible reading of their writing (including being published), others (such as Harris) were not. This awareness that their writing may not be published leads us to consider the content of a journal and whether it can be trusted. The argument among scholars in the field comes down to two factions: objectivity vs. subjectivity. Some scholars argue that the writings in diaries are unreliable and

inaccurate (when used for historical or interpretative purposes), due to the fact that the writers of these diaries were writing them as a piece of personal writing, and thus they contained a level of unreliability than historical accuracy. For example, one scholar who discusses the unreliability of journal writing is Jochen Hellbeck in, “The Diary between Literature and History: A Historian’s Critical Response.” He argues that diaries were written in first person and generally cannot be trusted. He divides the content of journals into categories of “literary and historical writing, fictional and documentary, and spontaneous and reflective narrative” (Hellbeck 621). While Hellbeck does not completely dismiss the importance and usefulness of journals, he does make it clear that he is skeptical as to the trustworthiness of the information contained in this genre of writing. Hellbeck’s primary concern with the journals is from the perspective of a historian, and he examines the relationship between subjective and objective reality within journal writing when he states, “The relationship between the diarist’s subjective voice and objective reality, and the question of any diaries’ representativeness as a record of individual experience, are further complicating issues” (Hellbeck 621). His ideas on the historical nature of the journal can also be applied to the critical analysis of the journals in a literary context. The argument he makes about the reliability of the writer also becomes an essential argument between scholars of literature when considering diaries as a genre. The trustworthiness of the information becomes a battle between whether the diary was written in a subjective or objective format and how readers can view the information contained within them—or even trust that information.

In contrast to those skeptical of journal and diary writing are those who believe the information in the journals of this period actually contains key historical and factual information. This group of literary critics (that I find myself in) suggests that diaries contain factual details such as dates, geographic locations, and key information that give readers insight into the everyday lives of these individuals and the role writing played in their lives. In fact, scholars have been able to check the factual accuracy of these journals and thus make a counter argument against those who discredit journals as an accurate source of information. If we consider the nature of journal writing during this period, we can consider two important factors. One, the majority of women who wrote the journals and diaries during the Civil War did so without consideration of the written work being published (thus negating the necessity of revision and editing), with a few exceptions—such as Mary Boykin Chesnut—who later revised her work for publication. Two, if a journal or diary was not intended for publication (as in Emily Jane Liles Harris’ case) then her story was probably not fictionalized, fancitized, or inaccurate. As with most recollections of historical events, confusion or discrepancies of minor details may appear, but the overall factual nature of this writing can be seen as intact.

When considering the factual accuracy of these journals, we should also note the large amount of writing that was actually taking place during this era. One such scholar that has worked with journals and their factual accuracy is Joan E. Cashin. In her biographical essay entitled, “American Women and the American Civil War,” Cashin states the following:

They [women writers during the Civil War] have helped shape collective memory by preserving artifacts, raising money for monuments, and founding memorial organizations...The scholarship on women in the American Civil War is also bountiful, large enough to generate many reference books, collections of essays, published primary documents, and synthetic works.

(199)

Cashin explains the profound role that women's writing had, the abundance of it, the scholarship that has followed, and how it has begun to re-shape the image of how we view women—both before and during the Civil War. Cashin's essay explains the vital role that women played in writing letters, journals, diaries, and other primary documents and how that role led to the factual and historical representation of women and society in their own personal writing. Cashin also discusses the factual accuracy of the journals, and she makes the case that these journals help us obtain a more reliable understanding of women's lives during this time period. Both Harris and Chesnut help illustrate the types of writing that was done and, in the case of Chesnut, the scholarship that has followed.

Cashin is not the only writer who expands on the vast quantity of literature that was written by women. In "Letters, Memoranda, and Official Documents: Teaching Nonfiction Prose," Christopher Hager discusses the large volume of literature that has been written by women during the War, and he also discusses the importance that everyday writing played in the lives of those living through it. Hager suggests in a book that is a guide for those teaching literature of this time period,

This vast corpus may sound mundane, a matter for historians only, and far afield from the realm of literature. But readers of the Civil War-era fiction and poetry need reflect only a moment to realize that everyday writings loomed large in Americans' experiences of the war and in the cultural imagination of the time. With striking frequency in the imaginative literature of the war, one encounters figures of ordinary texts circulating outside the channels of literary and journalistic publication. (91)

The information contained in this chapter highlights the importance of literature in the everyday lives of Americans living during this time period. Hager helps to offer scholars a key insight into the importance of these writings to individuals living during the War, and also allows current scholars to continue building on this important work.

In addition to Hager's explanation of the prevalence of writing in the lives of everyday people during the War, Dana McMichael explains the importance of personal writing in the lives of individuals living during this time period. In "Approaches to Life Writing: Confederate Women's Diaries and the Construction of Ethnic Identity," McMichael provides a critical examination of the role that writing played among women of the Confederacy. McMichael opens the chapter by describing an exchange that students had in a graduate class on the role of slavery and slave owners during the War. She explains how some were bitter and identified with the slaves, but she also discusses how others were ashamed and identified that their ancestors had been slave owners. She continues with the suggestion that many of the students failed to

consider the possibility that those who owned slaves might also have a story to tell. She makes the assertion that, despite the pain and fear, both sides who were involved with slavery had a perspective of this issue. Her analysis on these women writers during the time of slavery comes when she argues, “Few bodies of literature give us more direct access to these crucial questions than the life writings of Confederate women” (McMichael 102). The basic crux of the chapter is to help dispel the long-held vision or image of Southern women as the picturesque “Southern Belle” who is often absent from politics or the world around her. She helps to dispel the myth that these women were somehow the Scarlet O’Haras of the South and that their only role was to tend to the home and family. While many women did tend to home and house, their writings are anything but absent of politics, slavery, and the world going on around them. In fact, the journals and diaries of these women give us great detail about the life, politics, slavery, and role the War played in many of these women’s lives. The issues of slavery and politics are clearly evident in the writings of both Harris and Chesnut. In fact, both women demonstrate their knowledge of the world around them through the entries in their journals.

An additional consideration for scholars who study the journals and diaries of this period, aside from vast corpus of literature that was being written during the War, is the actual role women played in writing these personal narratives. While some women were considered unreliable as writers, others have viewed the writings of these women as an instrument in constructing an accurate and detailed picture of day-to-day life in the American South during the Civil War. One author who has done a

significant amount of analysis on the writings of women of this period is Alice Fahs. She explains the importance of the role that writing had for women living during the War. Her article addresses the idea that, while men were off fighting, women were helping to shape the narrative of the War through their writing.

Furthermore, Fahs discusses the masculinization of women during this time (and that women were suffering as much as the men off fighting). In fact, this can be clearly seen in the journals of Harris and Chesnut—particularly the journal of Harris who explains the pain and struggle of managing her plantation while her husband is away. In her article entitled, “The Feminized Civil War: Gender, Northern Popular Culture, and the Memory of the War, 1861-1900,” Fahs observes,

Such literature reveals gendered dimensions of wartime culture that have often been invisible to scholars who have concentrated on elites, canonical writers, and Northern intellectuals in writing the cultural history of the war in the North. Not only did feminized war literature insist on the importance of women's contributions to the war effort, but increasingly it argued that women's homefront sufferings were equal to, or even greater than, those of men in battle. White women may have been largely shut out from the combat experience on which men later based their claims to the war's meanings and to national citizenship. (1462)

The majority of her article discusses the importance of women in capturing the reality and cruelties of the War, and she explains how women were even, most of the time, expected to support the War effort. Although women were absent from fighting, they

were often encouraged to write letters to their husbands and family members who were on the front lines of battle. Women may have not suffered the physical effects of battle, but they did experience the emotional and mental pain that accompanied the loss and destructive nature of the War. This was true for those involved on both sides of the War. In the Southern states, women were particularly used to the effects of war—they often experienced a lack of food and day-to-day necessities—and this led them to experience the devastating effects of a war that was largely not of their choosing.

We see a similar analysis to Fahs when we consider Helen Taylor's article describing the role of women in the South and how that role was often feminized. In fact, she explains that women were expected to act like ladies and were often pushed to the margins of society and expected to "act like Southern cheerleaders" (849). Her article entitled, "Women and Dixie: The Feminization of Southern Women's History and Culture," reiterates much of Fah's same ideas. Taylor explains how the writings of women—namely diaries, journals, letters—were mostly private, but had a significant role in the public arena. Taylor offers an analysis of this portrayal of women in sociopolitical life in her article and explains how women's writing played a key role in helping maintain the morale and direction of individuals living in this era. Taylor asserts that the personal and private writing of women living during the War—and after—was crucial in shaping Southern identity when she asserts,

The politicization of women themselves, and thus their private writings—diaries, journals, letters—as well as their "public" biographies and fiction,

played a key role in keeping southern spirits and sense of identity high during the War [Civil War], in the earliest years of defeat and Reconstruction, and finally in the years between World Wars I and II. (850)

Taylor's analysis of women's writing as a driving force for morale and identity is directly related to the writing of both Harris and Chesnut. Throughout the journals of Emily Harris, readers are given a sense of the importance of keeping the farm journal both for the purposes of maintaining farm records and to voice her own struggles in dealing with the effects of war. Likewise, Chesnut (particularly toward the end of her journals) writes some of her most passionate entries detailing the devastation of the War. In fact, Chesnut uses the journal as a way to keep her spirits up while she was dealing with the struggles of both personal illness and the results of the War. Thus, the writings of Harris and Chesnut help to demonstrate how women were able to shape the world around them through their writings.

In addition to the portrayal of women as feminine and "ladylike," the role that slavery played in the literature of this period is also of utmost importance—and cannot be overlooked. There are numerous depictions of slaves and slave interactions in the journals and diaries of this period and the journals of Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut are no exception. For example, both Chesnut and Harris write descriptions of slave encounters, slave trials, and slave auctions in their journals. Though slavery was a normal part of life for these women, the description of slavery offered by these women is instrumental in telling the story of this era. The narrative that Chesnut and

Harris provide scholars on the issue of slavery is a unique and powerful perspective that can sometimes be overlooked.

The accounts of slave interaction that occur in the journals of Harris and Chesnut are divided into two categories: those that portray slaves in the historically held view of property, and those that viewed slavery as problematic or even wrong. Dana McMichael discusses the nature of why slaves were considered “property” and often experience erasure by some historical accounts. This erasure of voice and presence of slaves can be seen in the journals of Harris and Chesnut, and we can understand the lack of agency (that is, being viewed as property rather than people) when McMichael writes,

A widespread and easily recognizable pattern in the diaries is how these Confederate women actively ignore the slaves’ presence. They refuse to acknowledge similarities between their emotions and motivations and those of their slaves, and, further, they strip agency from the slaves through textual elision. (105)

This description provides us with an understanding that slaves were still considered property in the South and that even women had a lack of desire for the freedom of their slaves. This attitude makes sense when readers consider the fact that women had little agency when it came to social and political engagements. Many women of this time period, such as Harris and Chesnut, would have struggled for any agency they could obtain at all, and when they were able to obtain a sense of agency, usually through their writing, they would have wielded it as best they could.

While there is evidence to suggest that McMichael is correct in her description of slave portrayal in journals and diaries, evidence also suggests that other descriptions in these journals do highlight a criticism of slavery. This is much the case when we read the journals of Chesnut and Harris. One of Chesnut's most startling descriptions comes when she describes the sale of a slave women at a slave auction. She writes about it and describes the event as "monstrous" (Chesnut 29). She makes this reflection on the slave auction because she was not entirely on board with the idea of slavery or the War that was going on to end or preserve it as an institution. The pages of her dairy suggest that she was actually, in some ways, opposed to the whole ordeal. Emily Liles Harris shares a similar experience in the pages of her journal. She explains how one of her husband's slaves had run away but had been caught. The slave was punished before a trial was even held. She writes a stark reprimand against those who were administering "justice." From the words she uses, readers can tell that she was not happy about the incident. Both of these journals show that not all women were on board with both slavery or the War to defend it.

A final conversation that takes place in the literature of women in the Civil War is the rhetorical strategy or purpose of women writing diaries or journals during this period. Many scholars explain that writing in journals and diaries was a source of empowerment for women. If this is the case, it would be logical that women would want to write during this era to gain agency. One such writer who shares this viewpoint is Drew Gilpin Faust. In "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," Faust makes that case that women were able to break free of

traditional “prescribed” roles and were able to take on a feeling of power and agency through their writing. Faust writes:

Without directly challenging women’s prescribed roles, they nevertheless longed for a magical personal deliverance from gender constraints by imagining themselves men... Women thus became acknowledged creators and custodians of public as well as domestic culture in wartime south, exercising their power over communal sentiment in a variety of ways. They filled the pages of newspapers and periodicals with patriotic stories and verse and, perhaps even more important, composed many of the songs that served as the central medium of public wartime expression. (1206-07)

In this article, Faust argues that women were using their writing as a source of voice and agency. We can only begin to see the overall nature of women’s writing when we understand the rhetorical strategies and purpose to which women wrote during this period. One of the primary drives for women writers was the experience of empowerment that came with writing. This sense of empowerment can clearly be seen in the journals of Harris and Chesnut. While Harris’ sense of agency and authorship is timid and less forceful than Chesnut’s, Harris is still able to illustrate agency through the pages of her journal. In contrast, Chesnut exudes a level of agency, even forcefully, that was uncommon for her time—namely, she was the wife of an aristocratic Southern senator who eventually became a cabinet member in the Confederate States of America, and thus, she was a powerful Southern woman who used her journal as a tool to exhibit her agency and authority throughout its pages.

The new role that women were afforded by the Civil War allowed women to begin having authority through their writing. Thus, the rhetoric of women found in journals and diaries of this period played a crucial role in the construction of women's agency during this time period. The Civil War may have very well been a turning point in the American South when it came to both the societal role and agency of Southern women. The agency of Southern women writers can be a powerful way of understanding the South's past, but it can also help us better understand who these women were. The agency of women who have lived and written can be explored and analyzed to help us understand the current context of literature and how it evolves over time. The interest in, and results of, my research has allowed me to seek and explore the personal writings of Southern women who wrote before, during, and after the American Civil War.

After conducting my research, I began to formulate three questions: what role did the background and education of these women play, how was the writing of each journal unique to each woman, and how did each woman obtain agency through her journal? This thesis examines the Civil War journals of two Southern women, Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut, during this time in American history. Although both women were from the Southern planter class, Mary Chesnut was a very wealthy woman who had the means and leisure to write, while Emily Harris helped manage the plantation she and her husband owned. Given that only one of these women has been studied (Mary Chesnut), I suggest that overlooked writers such as Emily Harris contribute greatly to the literature of this time period. Because journals are a

functional literary genre, the study of journals as primary texts can give scholars a new context and perspective on the writing of women during this period. Through the examination of the education and background, writing, and agency of these women, I argue that they present a more complex picture of the Civil War than what has been previously offered by male writers. Their perspectives provide a more intricate way of understanding the dynamics of family life, the balance between social and private life for these women, everyday conditions in their lives, and the expanded social class during this time period. Thus, the study of journals as primary texts allows us to better understand and interpret history from those who were living during this dynamic time period.

CHAPTER TWO: THE BACKGROUND AND EDUCATION OF TWO SOUTHERN WOMEN WRITERS DURING THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR

One of the important ways to begin understanding the complex nature of women's writing in journals during the Civil War (thus providing us with a unique view into the dynamics of family life, the differences between social and private life, and the everyday lives of these women) is to understand each woman's background and education. Women's education prior to the Civil War was largely obtained through tutoring and academy style learning. While Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut were from different geographical areas, both women were from the planter class; and both received an educational background through the use of female, academy-style learning.

Sally McMillan, in her book entitled *Southern Women: Black and White in the Old South*, explains that "While most southern women received no formal education during the antebellum period, the founding of female academies in the South during that era opened up new possibilities" (77). This type of schooling allowed women of this era to study a variety of courses such as language, rhetoric, geography, and history. Although women could receive an education during this period, the school experience for these women was not exactly the same as it was for men. According to McMillan, the differences in female and male education was reflected in the types of courses women studied, as well as the demands of the coursework. (81). Both Harris and Chesnut took advantage of the education they received at their respective academies, and it can be seen in the writing of both authors.

A logical place to begin understanding the educational background of these women is by explaining the background of each woman in detail. Emily Jane Liles Harris and her husband David Golightly Harris were southern farmers living in the Spartanburg District of South Carolina during the nineteenth century. Emily Harris was born in 1827, and she married David Harris in 1845 and became the wife and mother at a mid-size plantation. The Harris family was not at the top echelons of society (social or political aristocrats), but they were not in the bottom tier of society either—they were from the planter class. In fact, David and Emily Harris were considered wealthy for their time. The Harris family was well connected in the community in which they lived, and they were constantly inundated with visitors from all over the Spartanburg area. Because David Harris had over six hundred acres (about one hundred farmed and four hundred and fifty un-cultivated), this demonstrated his level of wealth. Both his land and slaves placed him in a position where he became a prominent member of his community, and this status ultimately led to numerous political and social connections.

Due to the large amount of farming that David Harris was engaged in, he found it both necessary and useful to keep a farm journal. Initially, the farm journal was used to record everyday weather conditions, the amounts (and types) of crops planted, and other general details about the day-to-day operation of the plantation. Additionally, the farm journals contain small stories and reflections interspersed within the day-to-day entries. These narrative sections contain details on the various and important events that were occurring in the lives of the Harris family. No event

was more important for this family—and the journal that was kept—than the Civil War. During the Civil War, both David and Emily Harris record details of the events going on around them—both locally and throughout the United States. The farm journals of David Golightly Harris and Emily Jane Liles Harris chronicle the events of farm life before, during, and after the Civil War. The farm journals exist in fifteen volumes—each volume covering a year from 1855-1870.

The details contained in the journals chronicle the various political, social, and personal unrest that was going on in the South, particularly in the upstate of South Carolina and with the Harris family during the War. While Emily Harris and her husband David Harris tried to stay out of the War to the extent they were able (and the entanglement that came with it), they were not immune to the effects of the War. On November 20, 1862, David Harris had to report for service in the state militia of South Carolina. Both Emily and David Harris write of their distaste and objection to the War, and the journals suggest that David Harris did not even want to volunteer to fight in the War. In fact, the passages in his journal speak of draftees with contempt and show that he was not eager to enter into service for the Confederate cause. Furthermore, Emily Harris writes about the pain and difficulty of watching so many soldiers die for the political causes of the War. The journals of Emily and David Harris are important to scholarly study because they detail the many historical events that were taking place in rural upstate South Carolina—but they also demonstrate the life and writing of a Southern woman from a part of South Carolina that has often been overlooked by scholars.

Prior to marrying David Harris, Emily Harris received her education at the Spartanburg Female Academy (also known as the Spartanburg Female Seminary). She was sent there by her father Amos Liles when she was around thirteen years old. While at the Spartanburg Female academy, Harris was able to learn and study under the direction of Phoebe Paine, who was a schoolteacher from Maine. Phillip Racine, who transcribed the Harris farm journals in the 1980s, also researched the background and history of Harris. In “Emily Liles Harris: A Piedmont Farmer during the Civil War,” Racine states that “Through Paine’s instruction, Harris developed the skill of writing with both elegance and emotion” (386-87). The passages written by Emily Harris in her journal demonstrate the “elegance and emotion” of which Racine speaks.

In fact, it is her penmanship that allows readers to differentiate the passages that her husband David Harris wrote and those she wrote herself. It would be reasonable to suggest that she learned the skills of writing and penmanship while she was studying under Phoebe Paine at the academy. The entries of Emily Harris show a refined style of penmanship as compared to her husband’s. Her handwriting is ornate and beautiful. But her husband’s penmanship is difficult to read, and it lacks the ornateness and refined style of his wife’s (see photographs in Appendix A). Emily Harris’ education became useful after she met David Harris, because she would be asked to write in his farm journal while he was away fighting in the Confederate Army. Her ability to write, and willingness to write, became crucial to recording the everyday events that were taking place on their plantation—and later the stories that

she chronicles. It was important to record the yield of crops and types of agriculture techniques that were successful, so that those techniques could be employed and refined for use later on. Her detailed description of both the running of the farm and her life events allow scholars to understand what life on a rural upstate South Carolina farm was like. Her writing was beneficial to both herself and her husband, and it is also beneficial to those of us studying her journals today.

While Emily Harris demonstrates the background and educational experiences of a rural upstate South Carolina plantation owner, it is helpful to contrast her work with Mary Boykin Chesnut, who was from the affluent upper class and was also writing during this time period. This contrast gives readers another perspective with which to compare the differences in background and education of each woman. Mary Chesnut began her life in the South with her parents, Mary Boykin and Stephen Decatur Miller, who were wealthy plantation owners in the Camden area of South Carolina (Woodward 30). Sally McMillan explains that “Mary Boykin Chesnut learned to read at her South Carolina home, enrolled at a nearby Camden academy as a young girl, and at twelve, attended Madame Talvande's academy in Charleston, one of the region's finest girls' schools” (80-81). She later attended Madame Talvande's French School for Young Ladies in Charleston, and it was there that she developed a love of learning and writing. She enjoyed her days in Charleston, and her journals reflect the excitement and joy she felt while she was attending school there (Woodward 31). Her father owned several plantations throughout South Carolina and Alabama, and the family traveled during Chesnut's early years due to her father's

need to manage those plantations. Despite traveling, Chesnut decided, at the age of twelve, to remain in Charleston so she could finish her education. After finishing her education, Chesnut received several marriage proposals and eventually accepted James Chesnut's proposal.

James Chesnut was the son of Col. James Chesnut, Sr. and was one of the wealthiest plantation owners in South Carolina (Woodward 33). Mary and James Chesnut lived at Mulberry (a plantation outside of Camden, South Carolina), but they often traveled throughout the state. James, like his father, owned many plantations during his lifetime and this level of wealth and nobility afforded him social and political connections. During the time of secession, James resigned as a United States Senator and served as an official in the Confederate States of America. In *Mary Chesnut's Civil War*, C. Vann Woodward observes, "She began her journal while she was in Alabama with her husband, James Chesnut, Jr., who was at Montgomery, helping found the new Confederate government" (Woodward 17). During the War, the Chesnuts traveled extensively and stayed in places like Montgomery, Alabama; Columbia, South Carolina; Richmond, Virginia; Charleston, South Carolina; and at their home in Camden, South Carolina. It was during their times of travel that Chesnut would chronicle her experiences using a journal.

The original journal was a loose compilation of newspaper clippings, quotes, and excerpts from books she was reading—coupled with her daily entries. Woodward further explains that "Left in its original state, however, the Journal [sic] probably would have never been known to the public. It contained too many indiscretions,

gaps, trivialities, and incoherencies” (Woodward 21). This fact led to the revision of the journals by Mary Chesnut after the Civil War; and eventually, in 1875, she put aside writing novels to focus on “rewriting and putting the Journal in shape” (Woodward 21). There are several significant features of Chesnut’s journal that are of value to scholars who study it: her detail about the creation of the Confederacy and the events pertaining to it, portrayal and interaction with slaves (particularly sexual abuse of slave women), the education that was available to women of her era, and her struggle to find agency and express herself as an author through the journal. Her journal gives readers a primary insight into life as a woman in the South during the Civil War and the education, writing, and agency that women were afforded during this time in history.

Prior to marrying James Chesnut, like most women of her time, Chesnut began her education at home, and evidence of her education can be seen in the pages of her journal. Unlike the farm journals of Emily Harris, Chesnut writes with an ornate penmanship and sentence structure that surpasses that of Harris. Due to her attention to detail, use of quoted material, sentence structure, and her reputation, her journals have continued to be studied by scholars and historians alike—both for their aesthetic beauty and historic content. Additionally, her journal contains quotes from material that she had read or was reading, and this material ranged from a local newspaper article to many works of classical literature. In fact, some of the literature she had read was from prominent authors such as Ralph Waldo Emerson, Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley, Alfred Lord Tennyson, and others. Her literary repertoire also

included classics from French and Latin, which she had the ability to read from her schooling.

While evidence of her education and social class can be seen in the journals, evidence that Chesnut wanted to write fiction is also present. Chesnut had a deep desire to write novels, but was constantly interrupted with the demands of being a wife, the cruelties of the Civil War (which caused her to travel extensively—although she did not object to traveling), and finally ill health later in her life. Woodward goes on to explain how she turned to writing as a way of finding relief from illness, and that “her projects included translations of French fiction, a biographical essay on her husband, memoirs of her sister, and family history” (xxii).

Furthermore, readers become most aware of Chesnut’s education from within the pages of the journal itself. As mentioned previously, one of the most notable characteristics that distinguishes Chesnut’s journal from Emily Harris’ journal is the inclusion of quoted material. In fact, much of Chesnut’s journal includes references to books she is either reading or has read, newspaper clippings and letters that she had kept in the original journal, and footnotes describing her literary repertoire in the revised edition of her journal. Parts of the journal were burned at various points during the War, so we do not have a complete journal, but most of the journal does remain intact. In the pages of the journal, readers are presented with a well-educated, and well-read, woman of the nineteenth century.

One such entry that demonstrates Chesnut’s level of literacy is the entry on May 6, 1862 where she writes, “Mrs. Bartow brought me *Peau de chagrin*. Another

sellout to the devil. It is this giving up that kills me. Norfolk they talk of now. Why not Charleston next? Read western letter: "Not Beauregard, but the soldiers who stopped to drink the whiskey they had captured from the enemy lost us Shiloh," (336). In this entry, Chesnut has been confined to bed and makes reference to a book she had been reading. The reference comes from Honore de Balzac's *La Peau de chagrin, roman philosophique*, a volume of *Comedie humaine*, written in 1830-31, which is a fictional story of a young man who receives his desires through a piece of shagreen. This particular passage stands out because it shows how Chesnut was not only proficient in English literature, but French as well. Many women of her day would have been fortunate if they had been able to study grammar and literature, but only the most fortunate would have had the opportunity to learn a foreign language. Chesnut shows readers that she had access to various types of literature, was well read in it, and was continuing to read even when she was confined to bed due to illness.

In addition to the passage that references a French work, thus showing off her prominent education, she also includes sections in the journal that show how she was also well-read in different types of literature. An example of this is found in her entry for February 19, 1861. In this entry, she quotes Ralph Waldo Emerson who wrote, "The Uses of Great Men," *Representative Men*. Chesnut writes:

Above all, let the men to save South Carolina be young and vigorous. While I was cudgeling my brain to say what kind of men we ought to choose, I fell on Clarendon, and it was easy to construct my man out of this material. What has

been may be again. So it need not be purely ideal type. “We keep each other in countenance and exasperate by emulation the frenzy of the time. The shield against the stinging of conscience is the universal practice of our contemporaries.” (7)

In this entry, Chesnut writes about being in attendance at the convention that was organizing the Confederacy. She states early on that they were working on what would become the constitution of the Confederacy, and she mentions that everyone wants Mr. Davis (Jefferson Davis) to be general in chief or president. During her reflections on this event, she quotes Emerson, which demonstrates some of the materials that she had been reading at the time she was writing those entries. Thus, her journal is packed full of historical, literary, and political references to everyday events in her life.

Unlike the journal of Harris, which lacks references to literature or quotes, Chesnut’s journal contains a plethora of literary material. The journal entries make it clear that Chesnut is both more affluent than Harris, and that she has more access to different types of literature than most women of her time. While women had access to literary materials during the Civil War, many women did not have the time or the leisure for reading, Emily Harris case-in-point. While most women would have attended to the household of a plantation (despite having slaves doing most manual labor), Mary Chesnut was able to afford a lifestyle of ease—which gave her an opportunity to both read, write, and meander among the aristocrats and social elite of her day.

Further evidence of Mary Chesnut's level of education and literacy is found in her library. While Chesnut and her husband James were courting, he would send her books as presents. After their marriage, James had both a library and study installed at Mulberry Plantation (National Park Service 7-8). Because she had a library, this gives evidence that Chesnut had access to an array of literary materials, and she also had the means to write. Not only did she have the availability of this material, but her husband encouraged her to write. Having the support of a husband would have been rare, but in this instance, it gave Chesnut the ability to write freely and frequently.

The availability of literary materials gave Chesnut the opportunity to become the social and conversational centerpiece at many of the social engagements that she attended. It also allowed her the opportunity to develop a close relationship with Varina Davis (Jefferson Davis' wife), and thus become an influential part of the social class of the Confederacy. Having access to these materials also explains why Chesnut's journal is markedly different from Emily Harris' journal. Unlike Chesnut, Harris (as far as can be ascertained) did not have access to the literary materials that Chesnut had, nor did she have the time to read them if she did. Chesnut's lifestyle afforded her the opportunity to have other people (namely slaves) running the plantation, and this gave her the means to read, write, and have the social interaction she enjoyed—and even craved.

While both Chesnut and Harris had different backgrounds and educational experiences, readers of their journals are able to see the role that education in the lives of both women. While education in the low country of South Carolina was different

from education in the rural upstate of South Carolina, each woman demonstrates that education was important in women's lives during this time period. Harris demonstrates her education primarily through her penmanship and the content of her journals, while Chesnut includes references and quotations to the various literary texts she had read, and was reading, during her time writing the journal. Because each woman was educated, this further dispels the stereotypical image of women living in the South during the Civil War as "Southern Belles," but demonstrates the fact that they were passionate, intelligent, and courageous writers chronicling the events of the War from the perspective of women. Thus, the content of their writing shows us a unique perspective on women's writing that is often different than the writing of men.

CHAPTER THREE: THE CONTENT OF THE WRITING OF EMILY JANE LILES HARRIS AND MARY BOYKIN CHESNUT

One of the ways in which we can begin understanding the integral role that education and writing played in these women's lives, and an understanding that gives scholars a unique insight into the daily lives, social and private dynamics, and family life of these women, is by examining the content of their writing. Writing as a woman in the South during the Civil War was not an easy accomplishment. While there were some women who were able to live a lifestyle that afforded them the opportunity to write—namely the Mary Chesnuts of the South—other women did not have that opportunity. Women who were in Harris' position had very little time to write. What writing these women were able to do was contained in journals, letters, and diaries that they were able to keep as private pieces of writing. However, from these written materials, we can build a picture of what writing was like for these women.

One of the most important qualities of both Harris' and Chesnut's writing is the vivid and descriptive writing each woman produces. Both Harris and Chesnut demonstrate a level of penmanship that is ornate, though Chesnut's is significantly more refined. The content of their writing is also full of emotion, description, and vivid imagery. While both women were living in South Carolina during the time of the Civil War, each woman gives a different account of what it was like to live during this tumultuous time period. Both Harris and Chesnut use their writing as a way of capturing different life events from the unique perspective of a Southern woman in the American South—one from the plantation home front—and the other from the social elite class of the Confederacy.

A good place to begin understanding the writing of each of these women would be to start with Harris and her farm journal, because writing such as Emily Harris' has often been overlooked and hidden for nearly one hundred and fifty years. The most prominent feature of the Harris journals is the daily entries describing the farm and farming practices of the Harris family. Because the journals are composed of primarily David Harris' entries, it would be worthwhile to outline some of the differences between his entries and Emily Harris' entries. David Harris used the journal to describe the daily practices of farm life, but did so very briefly. For example, most of his entries are very simple and plain, such as the entry in 1857 when he states, "The family are well. My stock looks well as could be expected. Settled with Smith & King" (David Harris, 2 January 1857). However, there are a few times when he uses the journal to describe certain events in detail. For example, an entry for January 1, 1858 reads,

This is the first of this year and the first time that I have written the date of 1858. Will I live to write the date 1859? Who can tell? The new year has commenced with a most beautiful bright warm sunny day. The winter so far has been uncommonly mild. There has been no snow & but little ice. The birds are singing like a May morning. My pond is full of watter [sic] & my house is ready for ice, but if the weather does not get much colder I can get no ice at all. My family all enters the new year in perfect health & happiness. My stock are all in good keeping. They never looked in better condition. My wheat looks fine for the time of the year. (David Harris, 1 January 1858)

Readers of the journal will note that David Harris' entry is concerned with weather conditions and the shape of the farm and family, and shows little evidence of personal reflection. Although he starts the journal with a brief personal commentary, he quickly goes into the details of the farm. Most of his entries take this shape. His entries tend to depict the style of a log-book, which was typical of farm journals of that time. There are, however, key details in his entries. While his entries may seem very brief and concise, at times he provides names, dates, and factual information that give readers clues as to what was going on in the area (upstate South Carolina) and what life was like during this time. We learn a great deal about how David Harris used the journals to chronicle his farming practices, weather, and other aspects of his life. But the entries by Emily Harris are the more detailed and interesting to most readers, and those are the entries we learn a great deal about the daily living conditions on a typical Southern plantation.

Women produced more literature during this period than what some may realize and it is the writing of these women, like Harris and Chesnut, that is of key consideration to this research. The entries made by Emily Harris are some of the more detailed, passion-filled, and spirited entries in the entire collection of the Harris journals. Her portrayal of life on the farm gives readers an insight into how a woman perceived life as it was unfolding in the South during the time before, during, and after the War. In her entries, Emily Harris refers to the farm as the "plantation home." Much like her husband David Harris, she chronicles the daily life on the farm, notes interactions with slaves, details the planting of crops, logs the meat gained from

killing hogs and other farm animals, and describes the weather conditions on the plantation.

What is different, however, are her stories and the emotion that she adds to the journals. An example of this comes in her entry for December 2, 1862. Emily Harris writes:

All going well as far as I can judge but tonight it is raining and cold and a soldier's wife cannot be happy in bad weather or during a battle. All the afternoon as it clouded up I felt gloomy and sad and could not help watching the gate for a gray horse and its rider but he came not, though all his family are sheltered and comfortable the one who prepared the comforts is lying far away with scanty covering and poor shelter. "The Soldier in his tent." (Emily Harris, 2 December 1862)

Harris details the emotion she feels as her husband is away fighting in the War. Unlike David, who rarely shows emotion other than anger, she is raw with emotion—and it pours into the pages of her entries. When she writes "The Soldier is in his tent," readers can see her sadness during the absence of her husband, not to mention her reflection on the conditions she pictured him in. She shows a side of life in the South that is rarely seen and she challenges the image of Southern women as a Southern Belle, delicate and tender; rather, Emily Harris is neither delicate nor tender. She is a woman of strength and composure on the outside, but as she writes in the journal she cannot help but open up with emotion. She took her role as a plantation mistress seriously, and her journal reflects that responsibility. It would have taken a strong and

courageous woman to take over the plantation when her husband left for War, notwithstanding the difficult work that it would have been farming and slaughtering animals. Even when David Harris was home, her duties shifted to managing the affairs of the household.

Another aspect of the journals that give a key insight into the writing of Emily Harris is her portrayal and detailed descriptions of slave interaction. Her descriptions of slavery help us to have a better understanding of the social and political structures of this time period. Because slavery was a part of the American South, it is also understandably a part of the Harris plantation. Most of the interactions with slaves on the plantation were uneventful and depict scenes of everyday life for a typical slave in upstate South Carolina—such as planting and harvesting of crops, killing and processing of animals, and the social interactions between slave and the family. However, there are a few entries where readers are able to get a painful insight into this economic system that drove the South. One such interaction is recorded by David Harris on January 6, 1858. David Harris writes:

This morning I had a difficulty [sic] with Matt. I tied him up and gave him a gentle admonition in the shape of a good whipping. I intended to put him in jail and keep him there until I sold him, but he seemed so penitent & promised so fairly & the other negroes promising to see that he would behave himself in future that I concluded that I would try him once more. I think it a great piece of folly for any person to keep a negro that will not behave himself,

particularly when they can [get] more for them than they are worth. (David Harris, 6 January 1858)

This difficult depiction of a slave whipping shows the life and struggle of slaves on the Harris plantation, as well as life for any slave in the South. Through his vivid depictions of slave interaction, David Harris describes the detail of this whipping. The tone of his entries is flat, and there is little emotion contained within his writing. He also includes other entries that explain life at the Harris estate. These descriptions detail what slaves were planting, where they were planting it, and the harvesting of certain crops. There are also entries that detail the daily work done on the plantation by those slaves.

Not only did David Harris write about his interactions with slaves, but Emily Harris also chronicles her experiences with slaves as well. In fact, some of the more vivid and descriptive entries of these slave interactions come from her. Although most of Emily Harris' entries tend to be more elegant (through her sentence structure and penmanship) and emotional than David Harris', some of the entries are similar to his—in that, they are very plain and uneventful. In fact, these entries simply list weather conditions and day-to-day life. One such entry that describes life for slaves comes in the entry for January 19, 1865:

The evening is cloudy and cold. We saved a little rye today. The girls spooled a piece of cloth. The negroes are wearing wooden bottom shoes. They wear out so soon there is not much economy in using them. I had a tobacco bed

sowed. No mail has been received yet since [sic] the deluge. I am nearly distracted. (Emily Harris, 19 January 1865)

Her entry shows the difficult times that most families were experiencing towards the end of the War. Shoes had become extremely expensive, and the money circulating in the South to buy goods that people needed was practically worthless. It is through entries like Emily Harris' that readers develop a sense of how hard life was during this time period, and her choice of description makes this connection possible.

Her descriptive writing shows readers that life was even more difficult for the people who lived in the rural parts of South Carolina. The upstate of South Carolina was a difficult place to live during the War because, for the most part, the transportation of goods was done primarily by train or long wagon rides from places like Charleston or Columbia. It took weeks to ship items by wagon from these cities into the upstate, and when the port cities were under blockade by the Union Army, goods were even more difficult to come by. Life was hard for most of the people living in the upstate, and the difficulties experienced by slaves who worked the plantations of the upstate were even more difficult.

An additional feature of Emily Harris' writing is the description of everyday life on the farm, particularly the management of work on the plantation. She describes the work that was being done by slaves on the farm, and it seems she was often concerned about how the farm would function or survive while her husband was away. Some of her entries detail the concern she had over the work the slaves are

doing, such as the one from November 1862. In this particular entry, she is concerned with how well she will manage the plantation while her husband is away. She writes:

To day Elifus and York [two of the Harris' slaves] are ditching in the Buffalo Bottom. Edom and Will clearing a new ground on the same branch a little higher up and the negro women are helping me do up the lard and sausages. The new ground commenced a few days ago and I hope the negroes will be able to get on well with it without their master. To day I finished weaving up my wool. I have made into cloth this fall, about 65 lbs of wool. Some jeans I have sold for \$3-50 centers per yd. (Emily Harris, 25 November 1862)

This entry details the work that Harris had the slaves doing while David Harris was away serving in the state militia. Her entries in the journals seem to be patterned after the entries by her husband, but her entries contain more emotional details. Evidence of her emotion is given through the references she makes about missing her husband or yearning for his return, about her concern for her children, and her own lamentation over handling the affairs of the household while he is away. She seems genuinely concerned over her ability to manage the plantation, and evidence of her doubt and feelings of inadequacy come through in her writing. In fact, these emotional details spill over in to her views about the slaves working their farm. She sees their slaves as property, like most Southerners would have, and she does not seem to have more than a master-servant relationship (i.e. viewing them as property, not people). While some of the stories contain more emotional detail than others, there is still evidence that she is not connected with them on a personal level.

By using the journals as a place of reflection, Harris is able to give readers a depiction of the complex dynamics of family life on a rural upstate South Carolina plantation. She describes what life was like for her own family during the War. She details the emotions and struggles of a family who is going through the pains and difficulties of war. This furthers my suggestion that women's perspectives during this time period give us a more complex way of seeing life during this era. An example of this way of understanding the dynamics of family life comes to readers through her first entry in the journal, where she writes,

Sunday. But little work has been done since Mr Harris left except some little jobs that he directed. It rained all night one night. Was he sheltered? This morning little D G was fretted about something and he run crying out to the gates where the hogs were being fed, I know, expecting to be taken up by his father. The tears would come a little in spite of me but I chocked [sic] them down because the children seem sad enough without encouragement. (Emily Harris, 23 November 1862)

For most readers, this scene may be one of the more powerful scenes in her writing, perhaps even surpassing the scenes that she would later write about in the journal, where she is lonely from missing her husband. This scene details the struggle both she and her children experienced while David Harris was away fighting in the War, and her entry begins with short sentences that seem despairing. Her sentence structure grows longer and is more developed as she begins talking about the children and showing her emotion.

Similarly to how she details the interaction with her children, she also uses the journal to reflect on her own personal ideas and relationship with David Harris. An entry that shows how Emily Harris was passionate about her husband is her entry on November 15, 1864 where she writes,

This afternoon I took a short ride on our new horse. I do not like him much for the saddle. His paces are too rough. He will suit Mr Harris for a war horse very well. I want to call him Billy Button in honor of this horse which Mr. Harris rode when he came a courting but the children are begging to call him Roland. I dont [sic] know which it will be. (Emily Harris, 15 November 1864)

In this entry, she begins with a sense of sadness due to her husband leaving again for the War, but the entry quickly turns to the horse, and her trying to find a name for it. However, she is not just preoccupied with naming the horse, but she also mentions details about her courtship and the children begging to name the horse “Roland.” Her entries are nowhere near the caliber of Chesnut’s in terms of sophistication and literacy, but in her own way, she used her writing, education, and passion for her family to detail the events of what life was like while her husband was away. She is careful enough to mention small details that, upon first glance seem insignificant, but upon closer inspection become important to understanding who Emily Harris really was.

In stark contrast to the simple details contained in the farm journals of Emily Harris, Mary Boykin Chesnut’s writing is much more developed and refined. Her journal provides readers a view of complexities of family life from the perspective of

an upper-class aristocratic planter wife. This contrast allows readers to see the differences in social class and the expectations that came with it. While Harris is concerned with the children and the day-to-day affairs of running a household, Chesnut is afforded an opportunity to maintain her social life and write about it. The details and descriptions of social and private life allow readers to understand the dynamics of societal expectations that women had to balance. Examining the writing of Chesnut illustrates how the relationship between women's social and private life of this time period is more complex than is often understood.

We see Chesnut's descriptive and detailed writing early in the journals, particularly when she describes an incident involving a Northern female writer. During the course of their conversation, the writer uses the incorrect form of a word and Chesnut picks up on this. This shows that she was both attentive to detail, but her refraining from calling the woman out shows readers that she was also a woman of class. That entry comes on February 28, 1861 when Chesnut states:

In the drawing room a literary lady began a violent attack upon this mischief-making South Carolina. She told me she was a successful writer in the magazines of the day. But when I found she used "incredible" for "incredulous," I said not a word in defense of my native land. I left her "incredible." (11)

In addition to her noting the misused form of a word is the humor that seems to shine through her writing as a result of her personality being placed into the pages of the journal. This entry was a startling critique of someone who, by her own admission,

was a “successful writer,” but could not use the correct word form for “incredulous.” Chesnut’s journals are full of vivid detail that provide readers an opportunity to see her unique type of writing. A potential reason for her refined writing was due in part to her revision of the original journal, which made for an even more sophisticated level in her writing.

Readers are given another insight into Chesnut’s writing that demonstrates her incredible attention to detail in her entry on September 23, 1863. The entry comes as the South is fully engulfed in the War; and she had destroyed some of her notes, and even parts of the journal, while staying in Flat Rock, North Carolina. There had been a raid on Richmond in 1863, and Chesnut was fearful that the Union might come into possession of her journals, so she burned many of the letters, notes, and journal entries that she had. However, she picks up where she left off in July of 1862 by filling in as best she can. She starts the entry with the following words:

Bloomsbury. So this is no longer a journal but a narrative of all that I cannot bear in mind which has occurred since August 1862. So I will tell all I know of that brave spirit, George Cuthbert. [He had been shot and was injured badly] He asked one of his friends to write a letter to his mother. Afterward he said he had another letter to write but that he wished to sleep first—he felt so exhausted. At his request they then turned his face away from the light and left him. When they came again to look after him, they found him dead. He had been dead for a long time. It was so bitter cold—and the wounded who had lost so much blood weakened in that way. Lacking warm blankets and all

comforts, many died who might have been saved by one good hit [sic] drink or a few mouthfuls of nourishing food. (425)

This sobering entry demonstrates the pain and grief with which many women were facing during the War, but reminds readers that the Civil War was more than a political battle—it was a clear reminder of the difficulties that humanity can endure when there are political ideologies at stake. She uses her own voice and writing as a way to memorialize the memory of these individuals, and chronicles her own emotion as she does so.

Perhaps one of the most important ways in which Mary Chesnut used her literacy and writing is in her description of the American South before, during, and after the Civil War. Chesnut begins writing the journal on February 18, 1861 while in Montgomery, Alabama. She was thirty-eight years old, and begins describing the unrest that was going on in the South. She makes sure to clearly demonstrate her position in society as well, by explaining the aristocratic individuals who are in attendance at the dinner parties she is frequenting in Montgomery. The most vivid and historically important parts of her journal came in her entries in April 1861. While writing this entry, she was staying in Charleston while her husband (who had recently received a station in the Confederacy) was going to meet with Robert Anderson (who was the commander at Fort Sumter) when the first shots of the Civil War were fired. Her husband's involvement in the conflict that ensued led her to reflect on the event. On April 12, 1861, Chesnut gives the following description of the bombardment of Fort Sumter in Charleston Harbor:

I do not pretend to go to sleep. How can I? If Anderson does not accept terms—at four—the orders are—he shall be fired upon. I count four—St. Michael chimes. I begin to hope. At half-past four, the heavy booming of a cannon. I sprang out of bed. And on my knees—prostrate—I prayed as I never prayed before. There was a sound of stir all over the house—pattering of feet in the corridor—all seemed hurrying one way. I put on my double gown and a shawl and went, too. It was to the housetop. (46)

Her entry chronicles the fear and amazement that people standing atop houses in Charleston were experiencing during this event. Her entry for this date is lengthy (several pages) due to her covering many days' worth of material, and the entries preceding her description of the bombardment explain the heightened emotion and fear that was buzzing around Charleston leading up to the first shots of the Civil War. Her entries, unlike those of Emily Harris, tend to be more reflective and carefully structured.

In addition to her depiction of Charleston being bombed, she is also able to capture personal moments with those who were at the top levels of the Confederate government. In fact, she is able to give readers an inside look into the conversations that took place among those officials. Because of Mary Chesnut's association with the aristocracy, connections her father had, and the position her husband occupied, she was able to sit in on conversations that were going among the governing class of society that many women of her day would not have had the opportunity to be involved in. Mary Boykin Chesnut had a life that was completely opposite of the life portrayed

in Emily Liles Harris' journals, and readers see that when they read about the variety of social situations Chesnut attends. It is obvious, from reading the journal, that Mary Chesnut enjoyed the elite social life that being an aristocratic woman of the South afforded her. However, at times, she also laments the fact that she is a woman and cannot occupy certain positions of power. In fact, there are times when she is very vocal about this issue and uses the journals as a place to voice her disdain for men. Despite her social position as a woman, she is still able to give readers an intimate view of the inner workings of the society in which she lived but also the birth of the Confederacy.

Similarly to both her description of the shelling of Charleston and the interaction with the leadership of the Confederacy, Chesnut also uses her journal and writing to offer readers a unique perspective on slavery during the Civil War. Chesnut, like Emily Harris, includes details in her journal about interactions with slaves, and some of her entries detail the most chilling and gruesome aspects of slavery. She gives a close look at the sale of a slave and the rape of slave woman. In many ways, the journal of Mary Chesnut is similar to the journal of Emily Harris, in that, it mentions slaves as "negroes" and details the interactions in an understated way—namely, she treats them much the same as everyone else in the South did—as property. However, there is some emotional and reflective nature to the entries. One of the most startling and sobering entries is that of a slave auction that Mary Chesnut witnessed. The entry, written on March 4, 1861, reads:

So I have seen a negro woman sold—up on the block—at auction. I was

walking. The woman on the block overtopped the crowd. I felt faint—seasick. The creature looked so like my good little Nancy. She was a bright mulatto with a pleasant face. She was magnificently gotten up in silks and satins. She seemed delighted with it all—sometimes ogling at bidders, sometimes looking quite coy and modest, but her mouth never relaxed from its expanded grin of excitement. I daresay the poor thing knew who would buy her. (15)

This entry gives readers a more complex picture of the role that slavery, even in the upper class, played in the social and political structure during the Civil War. This scene from her journal gives readers of our current era a better understanding of slavery because it was written by a woman who was experiencing the horrific effects of this social and political institution.

Additionally, this entry details the emotional connection that Chesnut had with the sale of a slave girl. She relates the experience to a slave (“Nancy”) that she and her husband owned. Her relationship with slavery was complex, as she had taught many of the slaves she and her husband owned to read. Given the first-hand interaction with slavery that Chesnut had, she was not happy with slavery, but she knew that it was the system by which she could afford her lavish lifestyle. She is keenly aware of the issue of slavery, and she laments throughout her journal about the condition of slavery and that treatment of slaves. While benefiting from his system, she was opposed to it in many ways. One of the ways readers can begin understanding her position on slavery is when she equates marriage to slavery in the same March 4, 1861 entry. She mentions the Bible, and then makes a critical response

when stating, “Poor women. Poor slaves” (15). Her reflections on slavery and the treatment of slaves are compelling to those who read them, and it is clear that she was not happy with the institution.

Likewise, a significant event that Mary Chesnut describes in her journal is that of a slave hanging. Witnessing this gruesome event must have been both eye-opening and difficult for Chesnut, and it must have resonated with her personally for her to have included it in her journal. She also uses her writing to both describe the scene and show that she was aware of political issues (John Brown), and she includes details such as names in the entry. A friend of Chesnuts (Mrs. Witherspoon) had been killed by an uprising of slaves, and Chesnut reflects on this event in the pages of her journal. She chronicles:

The negroes who murdered Mrs. Witherspoon were tried by the law of the land and were hung. A man named Wingate, with a John Brown spirit—namely that negroes were bound to rise and kill women, and his philanthropy taking that turn, he made himself devil’s counsel and stood by the negroes clear through. At the hanging he denounced John Witherspoon bitterly. And had high words, too, with George Williams. (269-272)

While she seems to be bitter against the slave who murdered someone she knew, most of the time her attitude toward slavery was sympathetic to freedom. She was not a supporter of slavery or the War that ensued over it. She discusses her disdain over slavery in her entry on March 18, 1861. Although she was sympathetic with slaves and may have even wished for their freedom, Chesnut was still an aristocratic

Southern woman who benefited from the use of slave labor. She enjoyed the social life of the elite class, and that lifestyle was only afforded through the use of slavery as an economic system.

In addition to her describing the hanging of a slave and her vivid description of slavery as a social institution, one of the more gruesome details given in Chesnut's journal is the description of the raping of slave women. Chesnut seems to be quite vehemently dissatisfied with the system that is going on in the South. She writes:

Like the patriarchs of old our men live all in one house with their wives and their concubines, and the mulattoes one sees in every family exactly resemble the white children—and every lady tells you who is the father of all the mulatto children in everybody's household, but those in her own she seems to think drop from the clouds, or presents so to think. (27-31)

She goes on to describe how deplorable a system slavery is, and how the men who ran the plantations had black mistresses. She had witnessed her father-in-law mistreat women (slaves in particular), and this fueled her distaste for the misogynistic society in which she lived. Readers see her dissatisfaction with this system when we read, “my disgust sometimes is boiling over—but there they are, I believe, in conduct the purest women God ever made” (31). She discusses the innocence of the slave women who are taken advantage of by these men, and she pours her thoughts and feelings into the pages of her journal. It is through the use of this vivid and detailed writing that readers are able to see the advanced level of literacy and rhetorical voice that Chesnut has. She intricately weaves the details of prominent society members into the

pages of her journal, but she does so alongside the vivid depictions of horrifying events going on around her.

The entries that detail the men and women of the aristocracy, societal events, and other day-to-day activities seem to be written in very plainly with little emotion and detail. However, when she writes about the events that seem important to her, she does so with fervency and power. Her emotions pour into the writing, and the writing becomes very detailed and intimate. These details of slave interaction are more narrative and story-like, which is clearly a contrast to the journal written by Harris. Unlike Harris's journal, Chesnut's journal (in the passages she is most passionate about) reads like a storybook or novel. This makes sense given her desire to write novels.

When we consider the overall content of both women's journals, the vivid and descriptive writing of each of these women help to give readers a critical insight into life in the American South during the Civil War. While the writing of women has frequently been overlooked, it is through the passages of these women's primary texts that we are able to understand the role that writing played in these women's lives. The writing of Harris and Chesnut, and their details on relationships with men, slaves, and other women help to give readers an accurate representation of what life was like for not only these women, but for women all over the South during the Civil War. From the sophistication of Chesnut's writing to the simplicity (but elegance) of Harris' writing, readers can see that women were not only uneducated housewives, but

important writers during a period that often did not afford them the representation they deserved.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE AGENCY OF WOMEN WITHIN THE JOURNALS OF EMILY HARRIS AND MARY CHESNUT

A final way of understanding the complexity of writing that women were producing during the Civil War is the role agency (obtaining authority as a woman through their writing) played in their writing. Thus, we are able to better understand the delicate balance between social and private life, and the expansion of the social class of this era. The journals of Emily Jane Liles Harris and Mary Boykin Chesnut give readers of these journals a unique view into women's authorial agency during the nineteenth century. This unique view gives further credence that journals (both the farm journal and the personal journal) were a functional literary genre during this period. Both journals are written by Southern women living before, during, and after the Civil War; but, they are written by women of different social classes and literacy levels. The journals contain both similarities and differences on many issues, but what is significant about the journals is how each woman uses a unique level of authorship and agency through her own writing. It is through the agency of these women that readers get a sense of the importance that education, literacy, writing, and authorship played in women's lives of this time period.

Historically, women were expected to remain calm, keep quiet, and stay out of the affairs of men on the social and political spectrum. This lack of agency—including authorial agency—is a theme of discussion in Joan E. Cashin's article "American Women and the American Civil War." Cashin writes, "Before 1861, all American women had to contend with the idea that they should stay out of politics and concentrate on domesticity" (200). Cashin's ideas that women were to

concentrate on “domesticity” is very important to the discussion of women’s authorial agency, as it directly influences the discussion on women’s writing during this period. In fact, using the diaries of Harris and Chesnut, it becomes evident that, while most women did tend to the affairs of home and family, women were also writing and acquiring a sense of agency through their writing.

The agency that each woman (Harris and Chesnut) evokes through her own unique writing is perhaps one of the most important features of these women’s journals. Catherine Kerrison, in *Claiming the Pen: Women and Intellectual Life in the Early American South*, discusses the importance of journal writing in relation to women and their authorial agency. Kerrison writes: “Southern women began to write in earnest in the latter half of the eighteenth century, first keeping secret journals, meant for their eyes only, but then daring to write for others in journals, memoirs, and letters they hoped would serve as guides for succeeding generations” (87). Kerrison goes on to discuss how the increase in writing in the later part of the 1700’s built the foundation for women’s writing before and during the American Civil War. This foundation, and eventual increase, in writing is clearly evident in the journals of Harris and Chesnut. Scholars and readers alike are able to see how a journal was usually meant to be a private affair between a woman and the page she was writing on. However, we learn a great deal about how women used journals, and writing, as a way to obtain a level of agency and authorship during the Civil War. Each woman had a unique way of exhibiting agency in her writing, Harris being more reserved, and Chesnut being much more assertive.

One of the places to begin exploring women's authorship and agency through journals is with Emily Harris' journal entries. Though Harris is not as forceful as Chesnut, she is keenly aware of the expansion of social class during this time period. Her journal reflects her understanding of gender roles and the societal structures that were in place. Harris' sense of agency is much more reserved and quiet, but there are certainly times when she opens up about both her role as a woman and the constraints that came with a patriarchal system. One of the entries that makes this evident is her entry on November 7, 1863. Harris writes:

...I shall never get used to being left as the head of affairs at home. The burden is very heavy, and there is no one to smile on me as I trudge wearily along in the dark with it. I am constituted so as to crave a guide and protector. I am not an independent woman nor ever shall be. (Emily Harris, 7 November 1863)

It is clear from her entry that Harris knew what the concept of an "independent woman" is—but, she had no desire to be one. However, even an "independent" woman during her time would be nothing like what we, in the twenty-first century, think of as an independent woman. But she is nonetheless content that she is a part of a society that gives men primacy over women. She is weighed down by the responsibilities of running her husband's plantation, and she is left alone to handle the entirety of managing the affairs of family and business while her husband is away fighting with his regiment. One thing to note is her desire for affirmation and encouragement. She writes that "there is no one to smile on me as I trudge wearily

along,” and this shows us that she feels the need for, and presence of, her husband. While it could be that she fervently loves her husband and misses him greatly, it could also be that she is so ingrained and psychologically accustomed to a system of patriarchal power that she craves the structure that came with it.

Another entry by Harris that details her agency is her entry on April 22, 1864. By this point in the journal, Harris has been used to her husband leaving and returning from the War—several times. She has had numerous opportunities to run the plantation, and she had found that she did not like it at all while her husband was away. Harris writes, “All is darkness. After supper. I have just received a letter from Mr. Harris. The first since he left. He is in low spirits. I am very sorry for him, I can only help him by trying to do my duty at home” (Emily Harris, 22 April 1864). This entry describes her situation while David Harris has been away—again. She is content to believe that her only recourse is to maintain the plantation and “do my duty at home.” Her sense of agency is one that would have been shared by many women of her time period, as most women were trapped by a society that gave women little agency and representation publicly, and even though Harris is writing in a journal, she knows her husband will read the entries—so she is likely to have reserved her truest feelings and authorial agency. However, having been indoctrinated both by her husband and the society in which she lived—one that placed men in positions above women—it is likely that she may have truly believed what she wrote. Yet, while her society often excluded women from power, she is left in charge of her husband’s plantation while he is absent. Her lack of agency is one that is representative of many

women during the Civil War period, but that was beginning to change as women began to write more frequently, and even more publicly.

In addition to her being acclimated to a society that placed her husband above her, she also gives readers insight into the lack of agency women have when it came to societal institutions, namely slavery. One of the most passionate entries that give readers insight into women's agency is when she witnesses the punishment of a runaway slave. While slavery had been outlawed with Lincoln's *Emancipation Proclamation*, slaves in the South were still confined to plantations—even after the War. The Civil War did not end until March of 1865, and thus many slaves were still considered property in the South. There was rarely any place that slaves could turn to, and most did not even know about the order freeing them. Some slaves escaped due to their fight for freedom, while others received word of freedom and sought to make a run for it when they could. One slave, Elifus, a slave who belonged to Emily and David Harris, was caught by the local authorities, and as a result was punished. She records the account in her journal on January 20, 1865.

Negro trial, great trouble. To day some runaway negroes were caught.

One of them, Sam who once belonged to Dr Dean confessed a good deal and implicated others who were accordingly severely whipped without giving time or change to prove their innocence. Our boy Elifus and Gwin Harris' Pink [Gwin Harris was a relative of David and Emily Harris] were both whipped without proof of their guilt. I never will allow another negro of mine punished without proof of their guilt.

I understand that on next Monday the court are to go in search of evidence against Elifus. Things are reversed. People used to be punished when found guilty, now they are punished and have their trial afterwards. Elifus has cause to deplore the absence of his master as well as I. If he had been here it would not have been managed this way. (Emily Harris, 20 January 1865)

In addition to the horrific depiction of slave mistreatment, this trial also shows the powerlessness that Harris had over the court and officials who were administering “justice,” but it also shows the deep emotion she had for her slaves—superficial or not.

Passages like these give readers a better understanding of the time period, because we are reading it from those who lived it. While slavery was a part of the society in which Harris lived, she did not necessarily agree with some of the actions and methods that were used by the men in her society. As a woman, she did not have any authority or agency in stopping the actions of the men who whipped the slaves. However, she makes note that her husband would not have allowed these actions to happen.

An additional feature that distinguishes Emily Harris’ entries from David’s is how her disposition changes in the entries where she mentions her husband and having received letters from him. Readers can almost feel the raw emotion from the love that she had for David, and the pain she must have felt in his absence. His absence led her to consider the tremendous role that

she had been placed in and the weight of responsibility she had in his absence. She underlines the words at the end of each entry where she has either received a letter, or she has been dwelling on the aspect of his absence. An example of this comes from her entry on December 14, 1862. Harris explains:

At home. Husband gone to the army again, every thing [sic] resting on me, children troublesome, company forever, weather very cold, negroes in the newground [sic], cows, calves and sheep on the wheat. To day I have heard that the Yankees were shelling [sic] Charleston. Oh! God preserve my husband! (Emily Harris, 14 December 1862)

In this entry, an interesting detail to note, aside from the shelling of Charleston and her discussion of slaves in the entry, is how her sense of agency changes in this entry. She seems very distressed and upset. Her sentences go from formal and flowing sentences to short and choppy. Her entry for this date seems to be very abrupt and direct compared to previous entries, and the entries that follow. This change may point to the seriousness of the situation in Charleston, but more likely shows the deep emotion and pain that she is feeling while her husband is gone. She also mentions that the children are troublesome and that she has issues with company lingering around. It would appear that Harris is having a hard time handling the administration of the farm while David is away, given the nature of the entry. It seems that her life on the farm is becoming somewhat unraveled, but she is still trying to hold things together while David Harris is away.

While the journals of David and Emily Harris are typical of nineteenth-century farm journals, the journals do provide historians and researchers with a unique way of understanding life in upstate South Carolina during the American Civil War. Written by both a man and a woman, the journals show the differences in agency and rhetorical content that each of them expressed. Through the entries of these journals, readers can see how life on a rural plantation in upstate South Carolina was very different from the life a plantation owner living in Charleston, Columbia, or elsewhere in the South. Plantations in the upstate were smaller, there was more work for each individual to do, and more importantly many plantation owners (like the Harrises) did not want to get involved in the Civil War. These men and women were trying to establish a life and legacy for themselves, and did not have an interest in the political and economic contingencies of the war.

While Emily Harris has a few passionate entries, most of her entries are reserved and timid. In stark contrast, Chesnut has a more pronounced and even forceful sense of agency in her journals. Chesnut is vastly different from Harris in that she is much more open and voicing of her opinions. In fact, Chesnut is so vocal with her rhetoric that she had to burn sections of the journal—particularly when the journal was in jeopardy of being read by either the Union soldiers or other individuals who may have had access to it. The fear of others' reading was another reason Chesnut chose to revise the journals in the 1880's—prior to publishing them.

One of the areas where she is most vocal and her authorial agency is most

strong is on the issue of slavery. Her entry on November 27, 1861 states:

I say we are no better than our judges North—and *no worse*. We are human beings of the nineteenth century—and slavery has to go, of course. All that has been gained by it goes to the North and the negroes. The slave-owners, when they are good men and women, are the martyrs. And as far as I have seen, the people here are quite as good as anywhere else. I hate slavery. I even hate the harsh authority I see parents think it their duty to exercise *toward their children*. (246).

It is clearly evident from Chesnut's entries that she is not timid or shy about voicing her opinion on the social issues and concerns that are bothering her. She is very vocal on the issue of slavery, and she shows how she vehemently opposes it (whether for good or bad reasons is not known). Her passionate writing on slavery also gave reason for her to hide the journal during certain times of siege—as when she was staying in Richmond, Virginia. It was during such times that she also burned large sections in the journal, including almost a year's worth of entries from July 1862-September 1863.

In addition to her writing on slavery, Chesnut also demonstrates her agency through her opinions on men. While the journal is full of critiques against men, anything from critiquing her own husband to critiquing certain notable male figures of the Confederacy, she makes a notable critique against the leadership of the Confederate States of America—including Jefferson Davis (whom she knew well). In her entry for February 25, 1865, Chesnut writes about a conversation she had with a

man named Mr. Ancrum. She shares the same ideas and opinions against General Joe Johnston and Mr. Davis that Mr. Ancrum expresses to her. She writes:

Mr. Sidney J was a gentleman and a patriot. So is General J.J., and I do not think he would ruin his country to spite Mr. Davis. He acts according to his nature. He is a born retreator—bravest of the brave—and I think it awfully conceited of him to feel himself worthy of so much presidential consequence, importance, hate. (731)

Prior to this entry, Chesnut had been discussing the relationship between General Johnston and Mr. Davis, and she explains how the two did not get along. Then she makes a scathing critique of General Johnston. Her critique is open and honest about how she feels toward the general. She was a close friend of Jefferson and Varina Davis, and she was forceful enough to voice her opinion about her disdain with those who differed with her on her views of Jefferson Davis. Her journal is filled with examples of how she often differed with the views of men, and she even discusses how she would make a better representative to France than a man that Jefferson Davis had appointed for the position. These entries give readers a clear view of how Chesnut was able to use her pen and the pages of her diary to project her agency—both as a woman and as a writer. Her husband, society, and even other women around her often said women could not have a sense of agency—but Chesnut uses her diary to chronicle the events and decisions being made, and how she would handle them differently if she had the opportunity afforded her. This unique insight makes Chesnut's journal one of the best examples of women's agency and authorship during

the Civil War.

Not only did she exert her sense of authorship and agency against the social issues and men of her day, she also used her journal as a way of calling out other women who seemed to be complacent in their own lack of agency. Her journal is filled with entries where she critiques women that she knew, women that she was attending events with, and the women who were from the North. One of her entries describes a conversation she had with several other women on November 30, 1861. Chesnut writes:

Mrs. Lee is a Yankee woman who married a Southern clergyman—and has been always harder on negroes than any native. She can't get over the idea that they ought to behave like white people. I mean work. And if they do not, beneficent whip must make them do it, she says. (249)

This particularly entry shows the delicate balance between social and private life that women had to navigate through. Chesnut was able to maneuver within this system of polite “social” woman with her own inner private thoughts and feelings. In the entry above, she does not hold back about how she views women who do not align to her viewpoint and ideology—namely, her views against slavery. She mentions women by name and even describes them in detail. Her description of these women is another reason she chose to revise the journal in the 1880's, so that the identities and reputation of these women would be protected. These descriptions are contained in the original journal she kept, but many of the harsher details were omitted in her revision. The omission of these details would make sense because Chesnut had to live

among many of these women (or their surviving family) after the Civil War, and it would have been extremely difficult to live in the same community with people whom she criticized so openly.

Just as important as her criticism of men and women she knew are the detailed descriptions that she provides in the journal. One vivid perspective she offers comes when Chesnut is attending a church service outside of Chancellorsville, VA in September of 1863. The Civil War had impacted every corner of life for people both in the South and in the North. In fact, people tried to carry on life as usual in the South, when it was feasible. There were times when it was easy to continue life as normal, but other times were more difficult. Chesnut gives readers a truly grim and raw picture of what it must have been like to live during the Civil War when she paints a picture of church during a battle. Chesnut chronicles:

Stoneman's raid. It was Sunday, and i [sic] was in Mrs. Randolph's pew. The battle of Chancellorsville was raging, the everlasting slamming of those iron gates of the Capitol Square just opposite the church, all made it hard to attend to the service. Then began a scene calculated to make the softest heart quail. The sexton quietly walking up [to] persons members of whose family had been brough [sic] down wounded, dying, or dead, and the pale-faced people following the sexton out. Finally Mr. Minnegrerede himself leaned across the chancel rail for a few minutes' whispered talk with the sexton. Then he disappeared, and the assistant clergymen went on with the communion which he was administering. (469-481)

Chesnut describes this scene of a church sexton coming to members attending the service to tell them of the bodies of wounded, dying, or dead soldiers (perhaps a member's own child or husband). Members attending the church cannot help being distracted by the scene. This is one of many powerful scenes that Chesnut chronicles in the pages of her journal. The detailed and intimate description that she gives are what makes the journals so valuable to history and literary scholars alike.

One such value that journals provide is to show the various rhetorical methods that women were using. Chesnut used this story to give readers a carefully constructed picture of what it was like to be present during that church service, even to the point of describing the church and naming people present. Kimberly Harrison, author of "Rhetorical Rehearsals: The Construction of Ethos in Confederate Women's Diaries" claims, "Women's Civil War diaries are an important, though often overlooked, resource for historians of rhetoric, allowing insight into rhetorical challenges women face and the rhetorical choices they made during the upheavals of war" (243). I agree that women used various rhetorical strategies such as vivid and descriptive writing, the chronicling of historical details, and the use of their authorial agency in writing their journals, and we can see that with Mary Chesnut's journal. Her incorporation of intimate stories, like that of the church service, is evidence of the way in which she used her pen to capture both history and her own feelings about the events going on around her, most of which, she had no control over.

A final aspect of Chesnut's journal that gives readers, historians, and literary scholars an important view into the authorial agency of women during the Civil War

is her unique social status and ability to write. Chesnut, in large part, wrote her journal because she wanted to and could. Unlike Harris, Chesnut had the means (financially), ability, and time to write. However, her ability to write did not give her the same authorship that men had during this time period. Chesnut, like many women of this period, often wrote, and were even sometimes encouraged to keep journals. A few women, Mary Chesnut included, challenged the role they were placed in and often sought deliverance through writing—frequently in the form of a journal or diary. Through their journals, many women were able to speak freely and openly about their disdain of societal constraints.

In fact, Drew Gilpin Faust in her article entitled, "Altars of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War," makes this claim. Faust asserts, "Some women translated these feeling into a related, yet more striking expression of discontent. Without directly challenging women's prescribed roles, they nevertheless longed for a magical personal deliverance from gender constraints by imagining themselves men" (1206). Readers are able to capture the point that Faust is making when they read the journals of Mary Chesnut. There are passages where Chesnut criticizes these men, her husband included, and describes how she would have done things both differently—and even better.

Perhaps one of her most compelling criticisms comes when she writes her critique against her own husband. Chesnut is furious over her husband's appointment by Jefferson Davis as an ambassador for the Confederacy to France. Chesnut writes, "Found Mr. Chesnut reading aloud a speech of Mr. Petigru's [that was] sneering at

our weakness. And Isaac Hayne in his audience partly acknowledging it. Lost my temper. ((Oh, that I was a man!)) [sic]” (224). In this entry, she laments the fact that she does not have agency and that women were not respected, and it can be seen clearly that she is struggling with the confines of being a woman during this time period. At one point in the journal (August 12, 1861), she begins to criticize her husband’s weaknesses, and she wishes that Jefferson Davis would send her to France instead. The journals serve as a way of allowing her to have agency in a society that often silenced women. She identified with the agency she had among the women she interacted with while she was attending the socials and cotillions of her day, but she did not have a voice (agency) among the men (which she clearly wanted).

In most of the entries within the journal, Chesnut’s tone is very polite and even reticent; however, in the entries where she is frustrated with the men in her life, she is very temperamental and loses the politeness that she often writes with. This forceful tone that Chesnut exerts was probably a similar feeling for many women living during this period and may have pertained to a certain extent to Harris, but we can see from Chesnut’s journal entries she did not want to remain silent. In fact, Chesnut was at the center of all things political and used her journal as a tool for venting her frustration with the men who were constraining her status. Thus, she finds a level of agency and sense of authorship for herself.

Through examining these primary texts, we are able to better understand the agency, or lack thereof, that women struggled with during the War. The authorial agency that both Harris and Chesnut exhibit in their writing is key to understanding

the role that literacy and writing played in women's lives of this time period. By critically reading and analyzing the personal writings of women of this period, we can begin to understand how women were using their writing as a way to attain authorship and agency, and to chronicle their lives.

CHAPTER FIVE: JOURNALS AS A LITERARY GENRE

Through the examination of primary texts (the journals of Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut), readers are presented with a more intricate view of the daily lives, family dynamics, social and private affairs, and expansion of social class of these women. It becomes evident, through reading the journals, that the writings of women during the Civil War portray a complex society. The War, and the writings that accompanied it, was pivotal in allowing women to use their writing as a way to not only describe the world going on around them, but to use their writing as a tool to critically express their inmost and personal stories that were going on in their lives. While both Emily Jane Liles Harris and Mary Boykin Chesnut were two different women living in different parts of South Carolina, they were both writing their own story using journals. As readers turn the pages of these journals, we are given a unique insight into how women were living and writing through reading their narratives.

By examining these similarities and differences found in their reflections, literary scholars are better able to understand how women used writing as a way of obtaining a sense of authorial agency and freedom in a time when women were often silenced by the men who had both political, social, and publishing power. While their writing was not published in the mainstream of society (due to their social status as women), they were writing and chronicling the events of history from the perspective of Southern women—and in many ways, better than men because of their unique perspective on the War. The women of this time period provide a perspective that is

not from the vantage point of men, but from the women who were telling their story through their writing. Through studying the primary texts of Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut, literary scholars can begin to understand the role that education, writing, and authorial agency played in the lives of these women.

Education is one of the important ways in which women gained literacy in the South during the Civil War. The journals of these women show how education was important in their lives and gave them the opportunity to read and write. Thus, we are given a picture of women, not as the stereotypical “Southern Belle,” but as an educated writer of her time period. The entries found in their journals show how women used writing as a tool in their everyday lives, but they also show their unique levels of education. While Chesnut may have received a more polished education (due to her status as an aristocratic Southern woman), both women exhibit a level of intelligence and skill that shows education was a key component in their lives. Given that both women studied at academies, studied very similar subjects, and both wrote in journals, they are able to demonstrate, through their writing, a level of education that was, in many ways, the best of their day. The writings of these women show that women living in the South were educated and sophisticated and not the illiterate housewives that history often tries to portray them as—namely, the Scarlet O’Hara’s and Miss Daisy’s of the entertainment world. These journals demonstrate how education was used as a way of obtaining authorship and agency during their lifetimes, and through the use of references to outside reading material and beautiful

penmanship—these journals serve as primary ways of understanding women’s education in the South.

In addition to their education, we also see the importance of writing in these women’s lives through reading their journals. While Chesnut’s writing is much more refined and elegant, Harris also demonstrates a level of sophistication through her writing. Harris includes vivid detail of life on a rural farm in upstate South Carolina—a topic that is often undervalued and understudied. While the journals of Chesnut have been studied and written on, Emily Harris’ farm journals have had little to no study or scholarship. While Harris may have been the wife of a rural plantation owner, she was far from the uneducated image that has been traditionally associated with women of her status. Instead, readers are shown a woman who had a very descriptive and genuine writing. When compared to the polished writing of Chesnut, readers find a refreshing look into the writing of an everyday woman in the rural upstate of South Carolina during the Civil War due to her straightforward writing.

A final way in which readers are given an insight into the role that journal writing played a role in women’s lives during the Civil War is by understanding their authorial agency. Each woman has a unique sense of agency that pervades and emanates from the pages of their journals. Again, Chesnut includes quotations and references to materials that she is reading, which shows that she had a sophisticated literacy—but Harris also displays that she is attuned to the everyday struggles of women during this time period. Chesnut vents her frustration with the men of her day, while Harris capitulates to a society that says she must yield to the power of men.

While it may never be known whether Emily Harris truly felt like she was trapped in a society of male oppression, the entries in her journal suggest that she is certainly attuned to this world—but they also suggest that she feels powerless to do anything about it. In contrast to Harris' feelings on women's agency and authority, Chesnut is vocal about her struggles as a woman—and, at times, even vents this frustration in the pages of her journal. Both journals serve as primary examples of Southern women's agency and authorship during the American Civil War.

While agency, writing, and education played an integral role in the lives of these two women—and in demonstrating the importance of literacy of all women of this era—there is much to be gained by uncovering and studying the primary texts of women's journals dating to the Civil War. The journals and other primary sources of women's writing during this time period give literary scholars a way to examine the lives and struggles of women during this period. Journals serve as important places in which intimate moments can be recorded. Until recently, the last decade or so, journals such as Emily Harris' have often been overlooked or neglected; however, there has been a recent resurgence in looking at these texts. Part of this is due to the accessibility of texts. Many of these texts are now available through archived collections, and some are even available online. Not only have scholars sought to study these texts in more recent years, educators and those who teach writing are also discovering the value in journal writing and reading the journals of historical writers. There are two important components of why the study of journals has become a new “genre” in the literary canon. One, they demonstrate how some groups, who have

often been marginalized, attain authorship. Two, they help writers understand how journals can be used to keep a record of the everyday events going on around them.

Because journals are a personal form of writing, they can often be used to help us better understand certain groups of people who are often silenced or ignored by the mainstream of society. Like Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut (women who were silenced by the men of their day), writers today can benefit from having their own authorial agency in journals. Journals can become a place where individuals can feel both safe and comfortable writing. Studying the journals of Harris and Chesnut can help writers understand how authorship is obtained through journal writing. The journals of Harris and Chesnut are primary models of what journal writing is and how this type of writing can become a useful tool for obtaining authorship and agency when a society says that a certain group does not have agency.

Another way in which journals serve a useful purpose in literary scholarship today is through helping writers record the everyday events going on around them. Again, Harris and Chesnut serve as role-models that demonstrate what a journal can do to preserve the historical and important events going on in a person's life. Studying the journals of Harris and Chesnut can help us understand why journals can often become important parts of history. Both literary scholars and writers alike can learn how journals can be a tool to record and chronicle the events of our current time, and thus become a new "genre" in the American literary canon.

A final outcome from the study of the Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut journals is that these journals are becoming an increased part of the American literary

canon. Chesnut has even been included in some textbooks and literary anthologies, but there are many journals that are hidden from readership. There are many journals, like those of Emily Harris, that are tucked away in the vaults and archives of college campuses and museums all across the country. These journals can help tell a story of who we are as a society, where we have been historically, and can help shape the future of our literary scholarship. With an increase in interest in primary texts, there will also come the need to continue exploring these documents and understanding the value of having these journals in the literary canon. Studying these journals will help us understand the role that literacy played in people's lives (particularly those marginalized by society), and help us re-tell the story of history from the perspective of those who lived it. Through the use of primary texts, such as those of Emily Harris and Mary Chesnut, we can continue to learn about the world around us and the role that literacy and writing plays. Writing will always be a way in which to chronicle the experiences and events of the world around us.

APPENDIX A:

PHOTOS OF EMILY JANE LILES HARRIS AND DAVID GOLIGHTLY HARRIS



Figure 1: Emily Jane Liles Harris



Figure 2: David Golightly Harris

APPENDIX B:

SELECT PHOTOGRAPHS OF EMILY JANE LILES HARRIS' JOURNAL

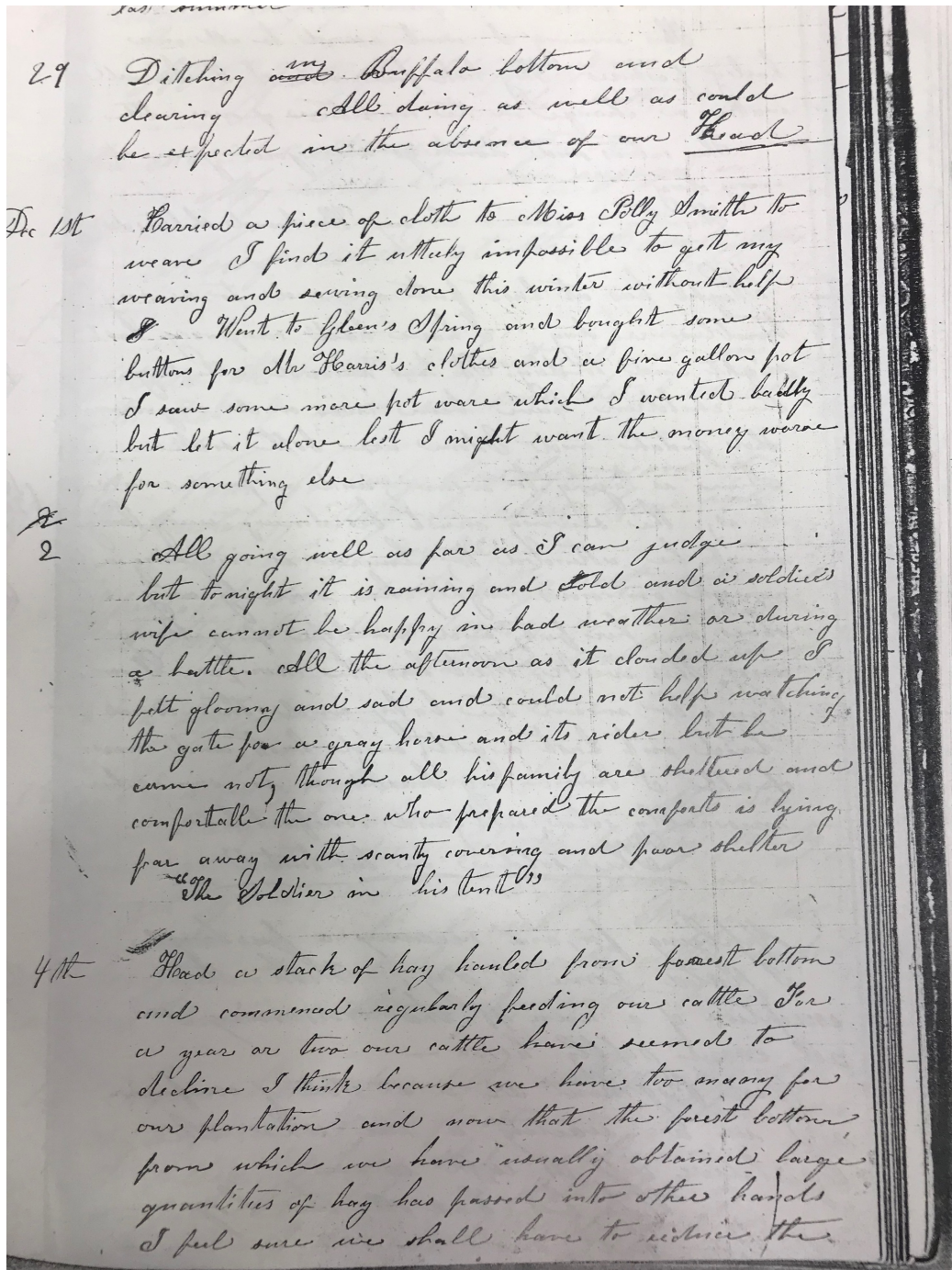


Figure 3: Emily Harris' entries for November 29-December 4, 1862. Note the clean penmanship.

November 23rd 1862

23rd Sunday But little work has been done since Mr Harris left except some little jobs that he directed & It rained all night on night. Was he sheltered? This morning little Th was fretted about something and he was crying out to the gate where the boys were being fed. I know expecting to be taken up by his father, the tears would come a little in spite of me but I choked them down because the children were sad enough without encouragement, It has always been my lot to be obliged to shut up my griefs in my own breast. I wish he was here to tell me whether to have some hogs killed to morrow or not

Mary Harris is with me tonight, she is crying for her absent husband and I must laugh and be gay on her account, Truly I have no time to grieve

Killing hogs

24 This morning being cold and frosty I had eight of our hogs killed selecting for that purpose according to my husband's directions, the smallest and least promising. They weighed as follows: 196, 170, 186, 181, 114, 120, 121, 110, amounting to 1148 lbs. The day's work was troublesome and I missed my best friends very much indeed. Just after dark, to my unspeakable surprise he stepped in. It made us all very glad but his visit is only for a few days, he was sent home by the authorities to warm some laggard members to join their company. I received a letter from him a little while before he came which was the first he

1148
 average 74

Figure 4: Emily Harris' entries for November 23, 1862

November 25 1862

ever write to me in his life except a little note the morning after he left home

25 Today Elisha and Gork are chittening in the Buffalo Bottom, Polom and Will. clearing a new ground on the same branch a little higher up and the negro women are helping me do up the lard and sausages. The new ground was commenced a few days ago and I hope the negroes will be able to get on well with it without their master. Today I finished weaving up my wool. I have made into cloth this fall, about 55-lbs of wool. Some years I have sold for \$3-5-0 to per yd I do

24 At home again - I went with the soldiers on the 20th (as we was ordered) early in the 20th I took the cars at the village in the middle of a large crowd. After parting with our friends we started off towards Columbia, when in sight of Alder we had a run-off but no one hurt. We had to make an extra-
proa camp, as we had no place else to go to - We had a lively time this night, as the weather was fine and we all had plenty to eat. In the night had the misfortune to fall in a cow-pit and was badly hurt for the time.

We had fine fun at the camp at the Fair-grounds (eating the victuals we had taken with us, and doing nothing else. Quite unexpectedly to me, I see

Figure 5: David Golightly Harris' entry for November 24-25, 1862. Note the differences in penmanship from Emily Harris.

November 7th
 9th - Sewing what

Today Mr. Harris left me again
 for the Camp. During his stay
 at home his regiment has been remo-
 ved to Greenville S. Ca. I always
 feel extremely bad when he leaves
 me. I shall never get used to being
 left as the head of affairs at home.

The burden is very heavy, and
 there is no one to smile on me
 as I tread wearily along in the
 dark with it. I am constituted
 so as to crave a guide and
 protector. I am not an independent
 woman nor ever shall be.

9th
 Sewing part of the
 Digging Potatoes

I found our potatoes
 small and few

To night it is cold and cloudy
 and seems likely to snow

A letter from Mr. Harris tells me
 that he has arrived safe at his camp
 near Greenville. I wish I could
 have the privilege of tending the
 blankets about him and making
 him comfortable this bleak night

How have our excursions for tents
 and. I will try to be thankful

Oh! pity this.
 "Soldier without a tent"

Figure 6: Emily Harris' entry for November 7-9, 1863. Note her somber tone.

No mail has been received
 yet since the delay. I am
 nearly distracted

41
 20th Negro trial, great trouble

To day some runaway negroes were
 caught. One of them, Sam who was
 believed to be a confessed as
 yet, deal and implicated others,
 who were accordingly severely whipped
 without giving them a chance to prove
 their innocence. Eliza and I were

January 20th 1865-

20th Eliza and Jim Harris' Pinks
 were left whipped without proof
 of their guilt. I never will
 allow another negro of mine for
 such an suspicion. I understand
 that on next Monday the courts are
 to go in search of evidence against
 Eliza. Things are reversed. People
 used to be punished when found
 guilty, now there are punishments and
 have their trials afterwards.

Eliza has cause to deplore the absence
 of his master as well as I. If he
 had been here it would not have
 been managed in this way.

G
 H
 I
 K
 L
 M

Figure 7: Emily Harris' entries detailing a slave trial dated January 20, 1865.

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