**Humiliating Attack and Gentlemanly Riposte:**

**Safeguarding a Reputation with Honorable Emotional Expression**

Abstract

In August 1850, James Chesnut, a fledgling politician from Camden, South Carolina, was closer to a duel than at any other time in his life. Henry Foote, a U.S. Senator from Mississippi, had verbally attacked Chesnut in a very public way that required, according to the principles of southern honor, a duel. Instead, Chesnut wrote an answer that adopted the language of the duel and followed the rules of a duel challenge.

The Chesnut–Foote affair shows that honor played an important role in emotional management: it was not merely a method of control, but a flexible source of emotion guidelines and a means of negotiating between them. A duel⎯verbal or physical⎯was not about showing any emotions at all: the parties were expected to channel the raw rage, arising from an ill-placed word, to the controlled expression of noble passion. Although southern honor required a person to defend himself against attacks and insults, violence could be avoided if one was fluent in the language of honor. Therefore, James Chesnut’s skilled and eloquent counterattack not only saved his reputation but also let him emerge the conflict victorious.

Anna Koivusalo is a postdoctoral researcher in history at the University of Helsinki and a former Fulbright Visiting Scholar at the University of South Carolina. In 2017, she earned her PhD from the University of Helsinki for her research on honor and honorable emotional expressions in the nineteenth-century American South. Her articles have appeared in *The Field of Honor: Essays on Southern Character and American Identity*(ed. John Mayfield and Todd Hagstette, 2017) and in *American Studies in Scandinavia*. Her current project explores how historical change reshaped emotional practices and experiences in the South during the Civil War era.