



Rebecca Harding Davis's Stories of the Civil War Era: Selected Writings from the Borderlands

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The ten stories gathered here show Rebecca Harding Davis to be an acute observer of the conflicts and ambiguities of a divided nation and position her as a major transitional writer between romanticism and realism. Capturing the fluctuating cultural environment of the Civil War and Reconstruction eras, the stories explore such issues as racial prejudice and slavery, the loneliness and powerlessness of women, and the effects of postwar market capitalism on the working classes. Davis's characters include soldiers and civilians, men and women, young and old, blacks and whites. Instead of focusing (like many writers of the period) on major conflicts and leaders, Davis takes readers into the intimate battles fought on family farms and backwoods roads, delving into the minds of those who experienced the destruction on both sides of the conflict.

Davis spent the war years in the Pennsylvania and Virginia borderlands, a region she called a "vast armed camp." Here, divided families, ravaged communities, and shifting loyalties were the norm. As the editors say, "Davis does not limit herself to writing about slavery, abolition, or reconstruction. Instead, she shows us that through the fighting, the rebuilding, and the politics, life goes on. Even during a war, people must live: they work, eat, sleep, and love."

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