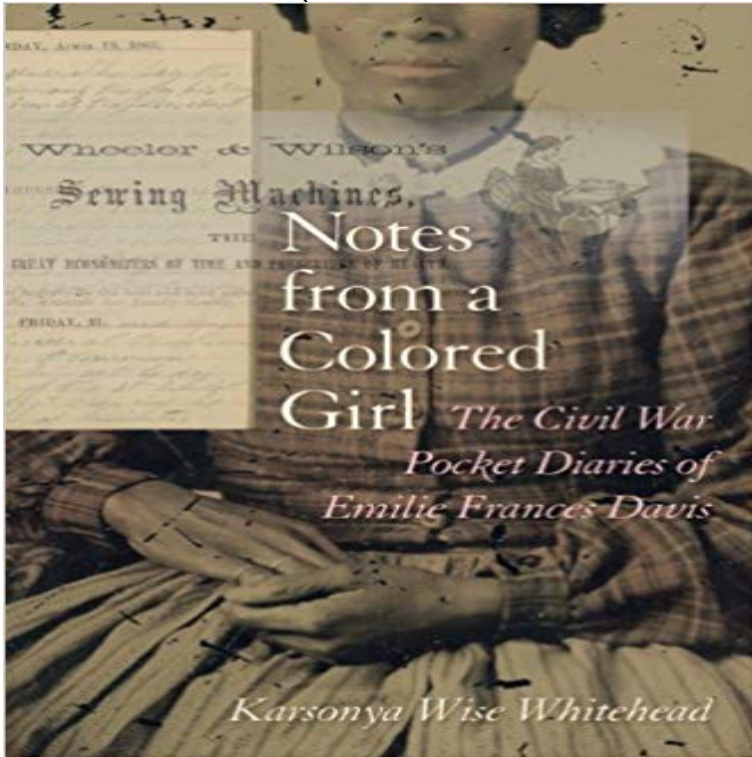


## Notes from a Colored Girl: The Civil War Pocket Diaries of Emilie Frances Davis (Womens Diaries and Letters of the South)



In *Notes from a Colored Girl*, Karsonya Wise Whitehead examines the life and experiences of Emilie Frances Davis, a freeborn twenty-one-year-old mulatto woman, through a close reading of three pocket diaries she kept from 1863 to 1865. Whitehead explores Daviss worldviews and politics, her perceptions of both public and private events, her personal relationships, and her place in Philadelphias free black community in the nineteenth century. Although Daviss daily entries are sparse, brief snapshots of her life, Whitehead interprets them in ways that situate Davis in historical and literary contexts that illuminate nineteenth-century black American womens experiences. Whiteheads contribution of edited text and original narrative fills a void in scholarly documentation of women who dwelled in spaces between white elites, black entrepreneurs, and urban dwellers of every race and class. *Notes from a Colored Girl* is a unique offering to the fields of history and documentary editing as the book includes both a six-chapter historical reconstruction of Daviss life and a full, heavily annotated edition of her Civil Warera pocket diaries. Drawing on scholarly traditions from history, literature, feminist studies, and sociolinguistics, Whitehead investigates Daviss diary both as a complete literary artifact and in terms of her specific daily entries. From a historical perspective, Whitehead re-creates the narrative of Daviss life for those three years and analyzes the black community where she lived and worked. From a literary perspective, Whitehead examines Daviss diary as a socially, racially, and gendered nonfiction text. From a feminist studies perspective, she examines Daviss agency and identity, grounded in theories elaborated by black feminist scholars. And, from linguistic and rhetorical perspectives, she studies Daviss discourse about her interpersonal relationships, her work, and

external events in her life in an effort to understand how she used language to construct her social, racial, and gendered identities. Since there are few primary sources written by black women during this time in history, Daviss diarythough ordinary in its contentis rendered extraordinary simply because it has survived to be included in this very small class of resources. Whiteheads extensive analysis illuminates the lives of many through the simple words of one.

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