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Helen R. Deese, ed., *Selected Journals of Caroline Healey Dall. Volume I: 1838-1855.* Charlottesville, Virginia: University of Virginia Press, 2006. Pp. xlvii + 598; illus. US\$75.00 (cloth). ISBN: 0-934909-90-3.

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In Helen Deese's edited volume, Caroline Healey Dall's continuous seventy-year diary appears in print for the first time. In this first volume, Deese adds an account of her life from the age of sixteen to thirty-three. Although up until now neglected and largely forgotten, Dall made significant literary and social contributions to nineteenth-century New England culture by fighting for abolition, woman's suffrage, and other fundamental social reforms. Not only was Dall a founding member of the American Social Science Association, Deese asserts that she was "the premier writer" on the topic of woman's rights in the "antebellum and immediate postbellum period" (xix). Dall's social contributions notwithstanding, her descriptive prose distinguishes her journal as a significant piece of writing. In her introduction, Deese states: "One can imagine Dall's diary itself, a journal of feeling, claiming its place in the literature of sentiment, as well as in women's history, the history of Transcendentalism, and the history of reform" (xliii). Deese takes great pains to select and arrange journal passages that reveal Dall's contributions to all of these areas of cultural interest, and she also argues that Dall's theological insights merit further consideration by religious studies scholars.

This volume is divided into twelve chapters which are chronological and thematic. Deese provides a cultural context for each set of journal excerpts. In her discussion of the book's editorial method, Deese reveals that only about half of Dall's journal entries have been included in this multivolume work (xlv), and that all of Dall's journals, correspondence, and letters are available in a microfilm edition at the Massachusetts Historical Society. For Deese, these annals offer a combination of both literary and historical appeal rather than mere reportage. To this end, Deese writes: "I have taken care to insure that the selected journals be not simply a series of vignettes of Dall's encounters with the great and famous but that they reflect as accurately as possible the fabric of her own life and as fairly as possible the complexity of her own personality" (xlv). The scholarship of this collection is formidable with the notes occupying as much space as the actual journal entries, but Deese's careful research is what provides the rich context that makes this collection of journal entries such a boon for scholars. Every name, event, and literary reference Dall mentions is carefully footnoted and annotated.

The journal entries begin in Dall's adolescence, and Deese specifically links the surrounding Boston Brahmin society and the Unitarian Church to the development of Dall's ideological interests. Her journal reads like a catalog of New England intellectual culture in the antebellum period. At a time when educational opportunities for women were scarce, Dall regularly attended lyceum lectures and discussions in which she interacted with influential figures such as Theodore Parker, Ralph Waldo

Emerson, and Margaret Fuller, to name but a few. By keeping detailed abstracts of such events, Dall was able to carve out a literary career, finding publishing opportunities in various newspapers and magazines, first as a teenager in the Unitarian *Christian Register* and later in *The Liberator*, *The Liberty Bell*, and *The Una*. She would eventually place some of her work in the *North American Review* and *Atlantic Monthly* and an 1867 collection entitled *The College, the Market, and the Court*.

Dall's journal is also a fascinating psychological study of a nineteenth-century woman who was divided between personal ambition and social and familial duties. In this first volume, readers are able to see the emergence of various ideologies in relation to both the public world of Boston culture and the private world of the Healey family. In the latter, Dall reveals not only her domestic obligations and her adolescent struggles with her demanding parents but also such difficulties as her mother's mental illness and her father's financial ruin. The journal blends Dall's descriptive sentimental style with her heartbreaking attempts to win her parents' approval by inserting herself into the repeated household dramas. Added to her battles with her mother is her bitter disappointment with her father's disapproval of her scholarly and social benevolence interests. In 1840, when he tells her she has disappointed him, she writes: "My father! . . . if you knew how a single exclamation of your own has dwelt upon my mind until my responsibility has become a curse" (38). As household crises arise, Dall frequently turns to her journal to confide her feelings of alienation. Many of Dall's diary entries detail her frustration over trying to penetrate her father's remoteness, and this feeling of isolation proves to be a recurring conflict in Dall's personal and intellectual pursuits. In June 1842, Dall writes of her father's emerging financial ruin and her futile attempts to comfort him: "He took no notice — he did not pass his arm about me, I felt that I was an incubus" (131). Deese purposefully includes vignettes of Dall's worshipful relationship with her father in order to show how her familial disappointments shaped her ongoing struggle with seeking approval while learning to assert herself against a domestic yoke, resulting in an ambivalent feminism that grew stronger with age.

Dall's early passions foreshadow the alienation that will come to define her feminist legacy. Deese suggests Dall's resentful isolation contributed to her eventual obscurity. Deese writes: "At one time or another, she alienated almost everyone else in the [woman's] movement, and it is through those very persons that its history has come down to us" (xl). Deese offers other reasons for Dall's obscurity as well, including her competing interests in social science that may have detracted from her women's movement contributions, and Dall's own refusal to promote her own work in the area of woman's suffrage. She relied instead on future historians to assess her contributions. Such an assessment, as Deese argues, is long overdue.

The second half of the journal details Dall's transition from debutante to wife, mother, and professional writer. The diary culminates in the passage where a lonely Caroline reads the 1852 *Memoirs of Margaret Fuller Ossoli*. This passage in Dall's diary makes the strongest appeal for the value of life-writing as a vehicle for identity formation. Although Dall had moved in the same circles as Fuller earlier in her life, she begins to examine her own life more philosophically through the literary connection made with Fuller via the *Memoir*. She concludes: "I am conscious of great growth — which I owe to her" (369). At this point, Dall begins to value the assertiveness that has come to define her interpersonal and professional relationships. Later, she reviews her abstracts of some of Fuller's talks that she had attended a decade earlier: "I am much disgusted with the egotistical tone they seem to have — and yet I know it is not egotism, but a happy elation of faculties" (369). Dall concludes that what might easily be viewed as egotistical self-complacency is better read as an insistence on self-acknowledgement in a culture where the opportunities for strong, independent, intellectual women were hard fought for by proto-feminists such as Fuller.

Caroline Healey Dall's journal offers a powerful view of the reciprocity between the public and the private in the lives of Victorian women, and it also reveals the complex social and scholarly interests

that occupied Dall. Her insistence on the value of what we now term “non-profit” benevolence competes with the household duties she is expected to perform and even the potential income she might make as a teacher or a writer. Dall’s diary offers a three-way struggle that defines a woman’s role between domestic utility, social reform, and economic independence, and it is a significant contribution to nineteenth-century scholarship.