

demande à être / [...] // pour habiter la lumière ». Sur l'avenue qui s'élançe vers l'horizon impénétrable de nos désirs à vivre dans la liberté d'être pour comprendre notre condition humaine et participer à son amélioration, je passe le flambeau à S. E. Saliceti qui exprime viscéralement cet état d'esprit: « Mon désir devant la cheminée, par l'entrebâillement des nuages, regarde sortir les étoiles de la mer. [...] Je ne me souviens que de toi, frère humain aux visages pluriels. »

*Lélia Young détient en doctorat en linguistique et enseigne à l'université York où elle est professeure agrégée. Ses travaux portent sur l'analyse et l'interprétation de textes littéraires et sont inspirés entre autres par la méthode d'analyse cohésive des linguistes Halliday M. et Hasan R. Lélia Young est aussi écrivaine: Nouvelliste et poète. Elle a à son acquis plusieurs recueils de poèmes et des nouvelles publiés dont Entre l'outil et la matière (1993) aux éditions du GREF de Toronto, Si loin des cyprès (1999) aux éditions du CIDHICA de Montréal, Aquarelles. La paix comme un poème (2006) et Réverbère (2007) aux Éditions du Marais de Montréal de Montréal.*

## THE GOOSE GIRL, THE RABBI AND THE NEW YORK TEACHERS: A FAMILY MEMOIR

Deborah Heller  
Bloomington: iUniverse, Inc., 2013

### REVIEWED BY MARJORIE ROEMER

Eva Hoffman once remarked "All acts of memory are to some extent imaginative." So, of course, it is here. Deborah Heller reconstructs a history of generations from great

great grandparents, through her parents and, finally, to herself. We learn of the goose girl who refused to shave her head and wear the *sheitel* (wig) as Jewish tradition demanded in her German village in the mid-nineteenth century and of the illustrious rabbi Yom-Tov Lipmann Heller who wrote a commentary on the Mishnah, the ancient rabbinic code of Jewish law, in the early seventeenth century. These are the forbears. We see their legacies: on the maternal side, independent, strong women; on the paternal side, scholars and linguists. Heller, herself, is both. This text, built as it is on meticulous scholarship, is still "a family story," the story we tell to place ourselves, to identify who we are. Dedicated to the succeeding generations and to the memory of her parents, the text chronicles the histories as they can be researched (through a rich selection of public documents, scholarly studies, letters, oral histories, and photographs). Still, its opening lines are: "This is the story my mother told." And while Heller doesn't dwell on her own story in great detail, her sensibility is everywhere evident in the work. She is the product of this rich set of traditions (and rebellions), and her scholarship, her sophistication, her feminist consciousness, and her critical wit shape this work.

I recommend the book to any number of audiences. The early chapters give insight into life in the shtetl, here the Russian town of Koidanov, near Minsk in Belarus, where Heller's father was born in 1902. This part of the chronicle paints a detailed and personal picture of the great wave of east European Jewish immigration to America. We hear, first-hand, as it were, of the tensions between German Jews who arrived in America earlier (mid-nineteenth century) and the Russian, or eastern European Jews, who arrived in the

great migration that took place in the late nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. We learn of the rivalry between Litvaks and Galitzianers, and the struggles of immigrants to assimilate and learn the language of their new home. The author's father comments on the Yiddish-English coinages: *nezdoriger* and *opsteziger* for next door and upstairs neighbors. All of this is rendered with records from Ellis Island, stories recounted in the family, memories, supplemented by the writings of Abraham Reisen, Nathan Glazer, Irving Howe, Moses Rischin, Anzia Yezierska, and others. The particular appeal here lies in the easy connections between the personal recollections of visits to the grandmother in Jamaica and her white cake with sticky sweet icing and the panoramic view of these stories in a larger history. As the author says in her preface: it is not about how these particular people mattered to History, but how history mattered to them.

For me, one of the great delights here is the charm of the letters from the author's father, Isaiah, to his daughter. Here is just one example.

Ever since I recovered from my "viral pleuritis" (a polite name for old fashioned pleurisy), I have had rather mild colds off and on, colds which I wouldn't have noticed in the past but which I find annoying and debilitating—I've been in and out of school, so often that everybody, teachers, administrators, pupils and I are getting a little confused as to whether I am in or out of school. My youthful, pleasant principal met me in the corridor the other day and somewhat bewildered said, "I thought you were out today." To which I responded, "Oh no, I am here; you appear to be absent."

These are some letters! And the urbane wit they transmit is clear.

The section of the book that seems to me most valuable from the perspective of historical study is the section that deals with Heller's parents as left-wing Jewish schoolteachers during the McCarthy period. She details what it was like to live in the expectation of a letter that might call her parents up to testify and "name names" in this extraordinary period when the New York State Feinberg Loyalty Law was established for the "elimination of subversive persons from the public school system." Upheld by the Supreme Court in March 1952, over the dissenting arguments of William O. Douglas and Hugo Black, the law was part of the apparatus assembled to dismiss teachers on grounds of "insubordination" and "conduct unbecoming a teacher" if they refused to answer any of the investigator's questions. Heller's sharing of some information from these files (made available to the public only recently) is spellbinding. One item in the indictment concerns a person also named Heller who lived some five blocks away from the author's father. This Stephen Heller is (erroneously) judged to be a relative and, therefore, his signing petitions involving Communist Party members is used as evidence against Isaiah. The entire conduct of this investigation is illuminating and terrifying, a chastening example of witch hunts and hysteria. Again, Heller broadens the scope with citations from a host of other scholars of the period, but it is her own dramatic recital of the personal that reverberates for the reader.

These are some of the high points in the history, but it is the cumulative effect of generation growing from generation and the artful reading of the traces of this history that is most compelling.

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## THE COMPLETE JOURNALS OF L.M. MONTGOMERY: THE PEI YEARS, 1889-1900

Mary Henley Rubio and Elizabeth Hillman Waterston, Eds.  
Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2012

### REVIEWED BY C. VAN DAALEN-SMITH

I am going to begin a new kind of diary. I have kept one of a kind for years – ever since I was a tot of nine. But I burned it to-day. It was so silly. I was ashamed of it. And it was also very dull.  
—Sept 21, 1889 Cavendish, P.E. Island.

I wonder if she knew. Or hoped. I wonder if she knew or hoped on any level, that so many women would be interested in her thoughts, her dreams, her life?

I hope so. In fact, some literary scholars propose that she returned to her journals and adjusted them in the hopes that they would be published posthumously. And thanks to scholars Mary Rubio and Elizabeth Waterston, they have been. These two literary women have worked tirelessly to bring to us the gift that is Lucy Maud's journal. This has been no small task, to say the least. According to the publisher of *The PEI Years*, as well as the earlier collection named *The Selected Journals* (first published

in 1985), Lucy Maud's entries weren't in any kind of order or categorized or organized. Of course not, for they were a woman's journal—a writing space. Her friend. Her confidante. Her solace. Her sounding board. And like Virginia Woolf, she too needed a room of her own, and the right to write. Journals have long provided this space for women. Audre Lorde's cancer journals provided a candid and profound lens on her life and on the experience of being viewed as a patient and as a diagnosis. And of course the diary of Anne Frank gave the world an unobstructed view of a hidden existence during one of the worst atrocities ever known to our world.

Rubio and Waterston reviewed and catalogued thousands of LM's entries and presented them for us in what at the time felt like a coherent way. But in so doing, they felt forced to make decisions regarding what to include and what to leave out. Oxford University Press explains on the back cover of *The PEI Years*, that editing decisions had as much to do with space as with ensuring the collection was "easily-digestible." And so the decision was to leave out LM's "darker, more reflective moods and her religious and philosophical speculations." I don't know about you, but leaving out these reflections and assertions ... left Lucy Maud out. I'm not sure what "easily-digestible" was to mean, but a journal is an exceptionally private space to whom a woman (in this case) can express that which she may never otherwise. If you take pause, you will see that Lucy Maud wrote directly *to* her reader... It's not directionless reflections, but rather noticings, assertions and descriptions *for*. Notice it in this passage: "And I speak of this so that you may realize the straights to which I am reduced." Lucy Maud is writing *to* us. She is communicating directly with her imagined readers and in