

REVIEWS



A Call for Reform: The Southern California Indian Writings of Helen Hunt Jackson. Edited by Valerie Sherer Mathes and Phil Brigandi. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2015. 232 pages. \$29.95 cloth; \$26.95 electronic.

After experiencing the violence and turmoil prevalent in nineteenth-century California, many chroniclers of the region felt moved to capture the past. A list of California's compelling and involved historical writers would include Horace Bell, Los Angeles' greatest raconteur, and Mariano Vallejo, a powerful *Californio* military man-turned-historian. Any such list must also include Massachusetts-born Helen Maria Fiske, better known as Helen Hunt Jackson, author of the novel *Ramona*. Set in California after the Mexican War, *Ramona* was a national sensation that exerted a profound influence on the state's reputation as a tourist destination. Some sixty years after publication, its impact prompted journalist Carey McWilliams to suggest, "Some day the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce should erect a great bronze statue of Helen Hunt Jackson at the entrance to Cajon Pass. Beneath the state should be no flowery dedication, but the simple inscription: 'H.H.— In Gratitude.'"

Jackson's novel tells of the star-crossed romance between a young, mixed-race California woman and her Indian lover. Though the author's fame rested on a romance novel set in a culture not her own, *Ramona* is not a simple case of cultural appropriation or exploitation. In her forties Jackson travelled in the United States, and as a result her attitude towards Indian peoples underwent an apparently authentic transformation, as did her feelings about the government for its abuses against them. This led to *A Century of Dishonor*, a book detailing indigenous peoples and their plight. By the end of her life, the same woman who once used the pejorative "Digger Indians" and described them as "soulless," had become a passionate advocate for Indian rights (5). With the release of *A Call for Reform: The Southern California Indian Writings of Helen Hunt Jackson*, scholars and the public gain access to a series of articles on this topic, some of which had not been published since the early 1880s. Beginning with an extended biographical introduction, the edited volume covers the Luiseño, Cahuilla, and Serrano peoples in seven magazine articles which originally appeared from December 1882 through December 1883 in *Century*, *The Independent*, and *The Christian Union*. Two appendices reproduce letters from Jackson to Thomas A. Bland of the National Indian Defense Association.

Although *A Century of Dishonor* failed to spur Congress into action, as was Jackson's goal, two years after the somewhat tepid public response to *Century*, she returned to California undeterred. On this February 1883 expedition she acted not only as a journalist, but also as special agent to the Interior Department. Jackson believed her new appointment and the story of missionized California Indians would have a stronger impact in Washington: "There is not in all the *Century of Dishonor*, so

black a chapter," she offered, "as the history of these Mission Indians" (32). The articles in this book collection are imbued with Jackson's despair over the fate of California's indigenous peoples. Their highly emotional character is deeply moving, but at the same time also problematic for historians using the documents as a means to understand indigenous Californians. Because Jackson posited the fate of the mission Indians as a problem of history, she researched California's Spanish and Mexican eras. Working in Hubert H. Bancroft's library, poring over original documents regarding the Franciscan missions and the laws governing them, she developed a somewhat skewed narrative (29). Jackson asserts the former neophytes' present condition stems from an interruption of history: that is, only the presence of the Americans had doomed Indians to their miserable fate. Previously, the Spanish missionaries and the liberal Mexican politicians that followed in California had sought to lift California's Indians out of barbarism and grant them civilization and farm lands.

In the first article in this collection, "The Present Condition of the Mission Indians," Jackson constructs from her research a brief history of the mission era to demonstrate the process that led California's Indians into a state "so absolutely unprotected, as they were, in the matter of ownership of the lands they cultivated for sixty years" (80). Jackson informs readers that the King of Spain guaranteed each group of missionized Indians receive title to their lands and that no entity had authority to sell off these lands. In fact, however, this never occurred during the Spanish period. Once the Mexican Republic emerged after the long fight for independence, most land was in fact granted to *Californios*. In another instance in which Jackson's lack of historical knowledge undercuts her claims, Jackson argues that "the instances were rare in which Mexican grantees disturbed or in any way interfered with Indians living on their estates. There was no reason why they should" (82–83). She paints a picture of peaceful labor relations between Indians and the *Californio* rancher class that cannot stand up to scrutiny, particularly in the years after the 1833 Secularization Act took effect. Jackson constructs this narrative because she already has a villain in mind: the land-hungry American. According to Jackson, while the Spanish and Mexican people in California engaged with Indians with paternalistic benevolence, the Americans only schemed to force Indians off the land through intimidation, or failing that, by testing Indian land claims in the United States court system. "The Americans wanted every rod of [Indian] land," she argued, "every drop of water on it; his schemes were boundless; his greed insatiable; he had no use for Indians" (83).

Most of the articles collected in this edition takes this tack: the Spanish, particularly the Franciscan missionaries, had Indians interests in mind, and the *Californios* established an egalitarian, agrarian society in which the Indians were either left to their own devices, or hired to work on the ranchos. Only after California achieved statehood in 1850 does Jackson discover Indians in Los Angeles being sold alcohol by unsavory characters, forced to live outside town limits, or treated like "horse thieves and enemies" (84). There is little doubt California's indigenous people suffered greatly during the American period, yet Jackson leads her readers to believe that the Spanish and Mexican eras were times of peace and prosperity for them. Nowhere is this more glaringly inaccurate than in her narrative of Indians living in Southern California's

Temecula Valley. Jackson tells the story of the Indians of the Temecula Valley, whom she calls Luiseños, in two different articles, "The Present Condition of Mission Indians," and "The Temecula Exiles." In Jackson's version, the Luiseño troubles began in 1869 when a group of Anglo ranchers took them to court over disputed land claims.

Though this period marks the beginning of their removal to a reservation, the Luiseño have a long history of battling foreigners for their lands. As historians Lizbeth Hass and Carlos Manuel Salomon have recently shown, the Luiseño became a major obstacle to the Pico family's attempts to lay claim to Temecula grazing lands in the 1830s. Haas, in *Saints and Citizens: Indigenous Histories of Colonial Missions and Mexican California*, and Salomon, in *Pío Pico: The Last Mexican Governor of Mexican California*, demonstrate that the Luiseño used a mixture of violent resistance and political pressure to maintain their rights to the land and to have Pío Pico removed as commissioner of the secularized Mission San Luis Rey. It is unfortunate that during her time in Bancroft's library Jackson did not encounter any materials regarding the Luiseño's earlier struggle and success, as it might have added to the sense of loss she so clearly elucidates while telling the story of their removal in the 1870s.

Other issues also show Jackson's historical research articles to be unreliable. She mistakenly tells readers that *Temecula* means "grief" or "mourning," when it actually translates to "sun" or "morning" (89). In several other instances, Jackson similarly projects her own despair onto the Indian people she encounters. When she meets old Benjamina and Laura, a mother and stepdaughter of undetermined tribal affiliation, Jackson's own horror at this family's living conditions inhibits her from understanding that people might find quotidian happiness despite their harsh surroundings. After watching Laura recite the Lord's Prayer, Jackson writes, "we asked the step-daughter if they were happy and wished to live . . . 'oh yes, we wish to live forever,' they replied" (104). Further, in another story she cannot understand why an elderly woman might fear white people coming into her home: "She was so alarmed at the sight of us that she shook. We tried in vain to reassure her, we bought all the lace she had to sell . . . [but] her hands still trembled" (109–110). Jackson expects this woman to instantly recognize her good intentions regardless of abuses she may have faced in the past. Instances like these illustrate that the content of Jackson's articles are as much a product of her expectations as they are of the conditions she encounters. It is clear that even as Jackson works to undermine the cultural chauvinism and bias of her day, she remains burdened by them.

These criticisms are not put forth to discount this collection's usefulness, particularly for nonhistorians, undergraduate students, and fans of Jackson. There is little doubt that Jackson's sympathy for the plight of California's Indian people is genuine, and those who know *Ramona* may find real pleasure in discovering the inspiration for the novel. Despite some of its flaws, because *A Call for Reform* touches on so many people, places, and issues in nineteenth-century California, much of the material in her articles is startling and unfamiliar, making this collection useful both for undergraduates and those with an interest in California history generally. Undergraduates studying critical race theory or American Indian history will find this book instructive in that it illuminates many of the problems that occur when well-meaning white

liberals enter Indian country with the best intentions. It is a wonderful text for generating research paper topics and discussions regarding the basic principles of historical methodology and practice.

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Capture These Indians for the Lord: Indians, Methodists, and Oklahomans, 1844–1939. By Tash Smith. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014. 256 pages. \$55.00 cloth; \$55.00 electronic.

A welcome addition to recent microhistorical approaches to the Christian missions' interface with Indian communities, Tash Smith's recent work provides a focused history of the Indian Mission Conference of the Southern Methodist church, in what is now Oklahoma. Composed of individuals of myopic, missionary zeal, this Indian Mission Conference (IMC) was one of the principal forces in the ethnocentric, racist, assimilationist strategy of "killing the Indian to save the man." The author's narrow subject provides the opportunity to investigate a history that has been broadly recognized, but not fully unpacked. Eschewing a broadly stroked framework of "conquest" and "helpless victim," the book offers a more careful, detailed treatment of the human actors and competing interests within and between Anglo and Indian groups.

Rather than focus on the well-documented, tragic, and lamentable church-run boarding schools and their strategies for cultural annihilation, Smith's readers are given a close look at how in the midst of cultural domination, free-willing Native actors navigated within social confines to accomplish their own social goals. The account "reveals the ways in which Native communities created their own religious space, even as ethnocentric pressures of assimilation marginalized Indians in American society" (192). Smith maintains that "understanding how religious beliefs motivate groups, rather than judging these beliefs on more modern terms that stress their ethnocentric or adversarial overtones, reveals a broader picture of the missionization process and the ways in which individuals exploited religion and church structures for their own needs" (194). And Smith's account reveals how this exploitation was performed by both Anglo and Native actors. The book does an excellent recounting of the variety of factions within both the Native and the Anglo communities and how each pursued their own, and often competing, agendas. It is a complex story of self-interest, institutional trajectories, agency, limited autonomy, and unintended consequences.

The book's chapters are primarily chronological, arranged in periods that are bookended by significant events. The origins of the IMC in 1844 and its focus on its mission work among the Five Tribes begins the first period, which ends with the effects of the Civil War on the organization and its work. The second period recounts the mission work's rebuilding after the war among the Five Tribes and the IMC's expansion to include work with three Plains tribes that were recently relegated to Indian Territory. This was a trying period for the IMC as it was associated with the