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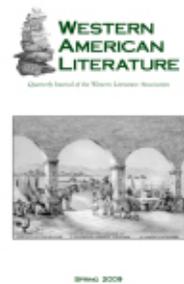
Massacre at Mountain Meadows (review)

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Western American Literature, Volume 44, Number 1, Spring 2009, pp. 87-88
(Review)

Published by University of Nebraska Press

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.1353/wal.0.0012>



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ence of visiting Newton's house in the form of the scientific method. She imagines Newton inside and asks, "Could he change his fortune? / In this room I peer at, hands cupped to glass, / He dreams on" (68). Here, Coles returns to themes of fate and sets the reader's gaze on Newton's pacing ghost. These poems also move between the scientific and the spiritual, and she blends the two rather than seeing them as opposites.

In an era where large-scale disasters abound, these poems speak to those with their eyes fixed on life's urgent unfolding. A glance through this window reveals moments where relationships, tragedy, and invention collide in the course luck allows. In the final poem, "Middle Ages," Coles emphasizes the interplay between the past and fortune one last time: "History cannot be left to chance. // Our histories won't leave us, though even chance / fails in the end" (91).

Massacre at Mountain Meadows.

By Ronald W. Walker, Richard E. Turley Jr., and Glen M. Leonard.

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008. 430 pages, \$29.95.

Reviewed by Pamela Pierce

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Massacre at Mountain Meadows meticulously describes the historical circumstances that led up to the massacre, still one of the most controversial events in LDS history. Written by LDS Church historians, this latest entry in Mountain Meadows scholarship attempts to escape the common approach of saying the Fancher Party were simply innocent victims on the journey west. Using new archival research, Walker, Turley, and Leonard strive to accurately represent the historical context surrounding the event.

The Mountain Meadows Massacre occurred on September 11, 1857, during a time when the LDS Church was on the brink of war with the US government. However, the book opens with the arrival of Mormon pioneers in July 1847 in the Salt Lake Valley. Descriptions of the violence in Missouri and Nauvoo, Illinois, significantly add to current understanding of the events that led up to Mountain Meadows in which 120 people were killed, including women and children. Photographs bring to life the LDS men involved in the violent act so that they stand as real characters. The research incorporates testimonials from the time period and evaluates their historical accuracy, a move that will prove useful for historians.

In the preface, the authors clearly define their goal as not simply providing a response to other histories that have already studied the massacre. The authors write, "Rather, we would take a fresh approach based upon

every primary source we could find" (x). The book is distinctive because of their painstaking search through the LDS library and archives. According to the authors, church leaders supported their research by offering full disclosure. Walker, Turley, and Leonard situate their entry in the Mountain Meadows canon within the continued fascination surrounding the event. A recent movie and a documentary have further fueled public interest in the massacre.

Walker, Turley, and Leonard's research is most notable for including Assistant Church Historian Andrew Jenson's field notes. Jenson was responsible for collecting accounts of the massacre in 1892. However, the authors' attempt to place the massacre within the psychological analysis of group violence needs more than the passing references they give. Nonetheless, the book is a must-read for scholars of the Mountain Meadows Massacre and LDS history. Framing the history in a narrative style makes the information approachable for non-academic readers as well.

Juana Briones of Nineteenth-Century California.

By Jeanne Farr McDonnell.

Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2008. 258 pages, \$50.00/\$22.95.

Reviewed by Anne Goldman

Sonoma State University, Rohnert Park, CA

Independent scholars have written some of the finest biographies of our day. Unfortunately, this book is not among them. Jeanne Farr McDonnell clearly respects her subject, Californiana Juana Briones, but fails to do her justice in this overly speculative account of her life. Born in 1802 in the town of Branciforte, not far from what is currently the University of California's Santa Cruz campus, Briones died in Mayfield in 1889 in what is now Stanford University's backyard. Her long lifespan makes her an excellent choice for a biography that seeks at once to throw light on one woman's personal trajectory and to illuminate Northern California's complex history of conflict and settlement. But the sepia-colored filter with which McDonnell approaches regional and individual pasts offers little of real usefulness to students and scholars of Mexican California and a great deal of misinformation to readers new to this subject.

McDonnell celebrates Juana Briones as a proto-feminist, in one instance hypothesizing that the "egalitarian nature of Indian society" might have provided Briones with a model for her "later refusal to bow under patriarchal directives" (43). She also romanticizes her as a pioneer, beginning one chapter with what she admits is an "overblown" claim: