



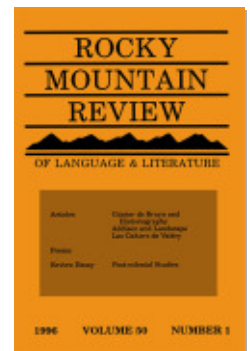
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One Foot on the Rockies: Women and Creativity in the Modern American West by Joan M. Jensen (review)

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Ultimately, then, although there are several fine essays in this book, of which Case's, Orgel's and Sedgwick's are only three, I was quite disappointed. I must confess that I tired of reading essays that reinscribe academic isolation and that quote the same few theorists as if there was not an enormous world outside the academy where similar, if not identical, conversations have been going on for much longer than queer theory has existed. Although someone who doesn't know much about the field will find the book useful, those who have more familiarity with the issues in question should pick and choose quite carefully.

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JOAN M. JENSEN. *One Foot on the Rockies: Women and Creativity in the Modern American West.* Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1995. 169 p.

Originally a 1991 series of lectures delivered at the University of New Mexico, this history intends to aid in the work now underway among scholars "to replace the older image of western women of a decade ago—mainly Anglo pioneers and prostitutes—with a new multicultural image, and to rewrite western history with women at the center" (vii). Jensen surveys the writing, painting, dancing, basketmaking, photography, filmmaking, and other work of numerous ethnically diverse women who may be identified with the Pacific Southwest at some point from the late nineteenth century to the present. Included are many well known and lesser known women artists, of whom the following is only a partial list: writers Mary Austin, Zoe Akins, Lucy Thompson, Christine Quintasket, Ntozake Shange, and Maxine Hong Kingston; painters Grace Carpenter Hudson, Georgia O'Keefe, and Judy Baca; basketmakers Joseppa Dick, Annie Burke, and Burke's daughter Elsie Allen; photographer Emma Freeman; and dancers Isadora Duncan, Martha Graham, Maud Allan, Agnes de Mille, and Essie Parrish. Clearly, Jensen has cast her net widely—rather too widely, in fact, to treat substantively (in 150 pages of text) either these women's work or the many factors that supported or inhibited its production.

The latter is Jensen's chief interest. "To create," she claims, these artists "needed at least four essential elements: an ideology that valued their creativity, cultural support that sustained their creative lives, a market or exchange system that provided a demand for their cultural products, and an audience that understood, criticized, and kept their cultural traditions alive" (4). Just where one can find the book exploring the first two points systematically is a bit unclear—though they are mentioned in general terms, it is true, numerous times throughout—unless one counts the early chapters' interest in the degree of involvement, for good and for bad, exhibited by some artists' immediate "cultures," their families and their male sexual partners. One example is that of early twentieth-century

Californians Grace and John Hudson: instrumental as he was in making her paintings support them financially, there nevertheless came a time when she seemed better able to work while living apart from him. Although Jensen explores this theme of male influence in other examples—almost exclusively Anglo couples, unfortunately—they are often stories, such as Isadora Duncan's and Georgia O'Keeffe's, that have been better told elsewhere.

Of course, cultural ideology and support include much more than the artists' personal lives, so these topics overlap with the third and fourth ones Jensen singles out, markets and audiences. "Naming a Price, Finding a Space: The Marketplace" is perhaps Jensen's most interesting chapter, in which she traces fluctuating economic attitudes—not always coincident with critical ones—in both the east and west toward western women's arts. For example, the Native American baskets that first attracted the attention of white tourists in search of cheap souvenirs soon became, thanks to the aggressive activity of white collectors like Grace Nicholson, high-ticket museum pieces. Except for the fact that some of the artists themselves—such as Joseppa Dick—benefitted financially from this development, these pieces could almost, on one level, be called the spoils of war, the usually quiet but inexorable war that was waged against indigenous groups by an advancing (literally, with improved rail and auto routes) Euro-American culture.

Basketry also figures prominently in the next chapter on audiences, though one senses here that a distinction has been made without a difference. Somewhat better is the discussion offered in this part of the book of dance—of the wild west shows, which appropriated both European ethnic dance forms and Native American ceremonial dances; of the popular entertainment-hall performances incorporating numerous vaudeville, acrobatic, and gymnastic elements; of the Mexican-American folk dances presented by roving family troupes; and of the concert-hall dancing, epitomized in the work of Duncan and Allan, that allowed for some subtle eroticism in a high-brow form of "classical, or ideal, dance" (89). In all cases, the tastes and mores of white, chiefly male audiences implicitly dictated which women could or could not build careers in particular spheres: for instance, middle-class discomfort with black and other non-white sexuality largely kept women of color out of elite American concert halls.

These are a few of the book's better moments, when it sheds light on the forces that thwarted some artists and thrust others into the arms of fame and, in a few cases, fortune. What seems less necessary—again, given the overall brevity of the text—are the many pages and finally the entire chapter devoted to those on the historical and contemporary periphery, as it were, of so many years of Southwestern women's art. These are the feminist anthropologists, ethnologists, historians, and critics who have for several decades been doing the valuable archaeological work of unearthing literally hundreds of hitherto obscure artists in all manner of media. Not that this isn't an interesting and important story; it certainly is—but one better saved for another book. What one wishes all this room had been given over to instead is an exploration of the nature of feminine creativity itself as it

responded to or was shaped by the genius of place—the particularities of climate, of geophysical landscape, and perhaps even of the larger biotic (that is, nonhuman) community. Even more important in a cross-cultural study is the question of what points of convergence and divergence present themselves when considering, on the one hand, the art of indigenous, increasingly displaced women with culturally inherited memories of this place, and on the other, the work of transplanted, essentially colonial women for whom the Southwest was necessarily a new-found love. And although the author admits from the start she will not undertake an analysis of creativity—nor, by extension, any of Southwestern feminine creativity—this reader cannot help but wonder how it can be largely avoided in a book that consciously confines itself (with the one odd exception of Oklahoman Tillie Olsen) to the creative productions of women sharing a very special regional address. Surely there is more of interest to these artists' stories than the details of their respective economic and critical successes.

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DAVID KAUFMANN. *The Business of Common Life: Novels and Classical Economics between Revolution and Reform*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995. 172 p.

David Kaufmann's *The Business of Common Life* is a very interesting, well written, and frustrating study. It sets out to investigate the interrelations between the novel and economic theory in early nineteenth-century England. Following a chapter laying out his theoretical underpinnings, Kaufmann discusses Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* in light of Burke, Paine, and Adam Smith, Anne Radcliffe's *The Italian* and Scott's *Waverley*, *Redgauntlet*, and *The Antiquary* (in separate chapters on the two novelists) in light of Malthus and Ricardo, and Jane Austen's *Persuasion* and *Sanditon* (briefly) in light of John Stuart Mill. The book is often useful and provocative in its juxtaposition of ideas and texts while it is teasingly inadequate in its breadth and its conclusions.

Kaufmann's thesis is that "classical' economics . . . and certain historically important novels . . . constitute parallel contributions to the project of framing, expressing, and suppressing the needs generated by the development of British commercial modernity" (4-5). He particularly concerns himself with the "conflict between commutative rights and distributive justice" made central by the eighteenth century's defining "happiness' as the proper goal of social life" (viii). In one of his best chapters, Kaufmann argues that Shelley's *Frankenstein* "is obsessed and apparently deeply disappointed with" the language of justice. In each of the multiple narratives, the teller attempts to legitimate his actions, with Victor stressing commutative rights, property, and the monster claiming distributive justice, satisfaction of basic needs (35). The monster's demand for distributive justice loses out