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Review of Helen Hunt Jackson

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Helen Hunt Jackson. By Rosemary Whitaker. Boise, Idaho: Boise State University Western Writers Series, 1987. Selected bibliography. 50 pp. \$2.95.

Helen Hunt Jackson, considered by Emerson "the greatest American woman poet," was author of more than thirty books and numerous newspaper pieces and articles. Virtually forgotten today, she is ironically the subject of two short biographies written last year, although neither eclipses the one written in 1939 by Ruth Odell.

Rosemary Whitaker describes Jackson as a writer interested in helping readers live more satisfactory lives. Her plots are romantic; and her heroines are strong, self-reliant women, much like Jackson, who supported herself by writing.

Literally "possessed" by the plight of the American Indian, Jackson wrote *A Century of Dishonor*, condemning the government's Indian Policy; a report on the plight of the Mission Indian in California; and a novel, *Ramona*, which has been reprinted more than three hundred times. Whitaker believes that *Ramona* did not generate the same enthusiasm as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which was its intention, because Jackson was writing woman's fiction while Harriet Beecher Stowe was not.

Although based solely on secondary sources, this pamphlet accomplishes its primary purpose. Part of a western writers series, including biographies of Mary Hallock Foote, Wallace Stegner, and Bret Harte, it places Jackson among the illustrious company that she so well deserves.

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