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*Journey to Autonomy: A Memoir*, by Louise Rosenfield Noun. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1990. 143 pp. Illustrations, index. \$19.95 cloth.

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Louise Noun's memoir begins with her birth to a wealthy Des Moines family in 1908 and ends with her emergence as one of the nation's foremost collectors of works by women artists. Between these two events, Noun's life was marked largely by frustration with the roles assigned to her: dutiful daughter, self-sacrificing wife and mother, unsalaried volunteer. Only in her later years was Noun able to create a satisfying identity for herself. Noun's chronicle of her "journey to autonomy" serves not only as the story of one woman's experience but as an insightful discussion of the times in which she lived.

Noun's account of her early life focuses largely on her relationship with her mother, a woman who was "strong but unloving" (3). The daughter of German Jews who settled in Oskaloosa, Iowa, Rose Frankel Rosenfield viewed her marriage to Des Moines department store owner Meyer Rosenfield as the end of her chances for a life of travel and adventure. As a result, she imposed her own unrealized dreams on her two daughters, sending younger daughter Louise to study art history at Radcliffe/Harvard, even though the young woman "showed no abilities or natural interest in this direction" (17). Until her death in 1960, Rose Rosenfield remained a controlling presence in her daughter's life, contributing to Noun's negative self-image.

Following marriage to Des Moines dermatologist Maurie Noun in 1936, the author devoted herself to the care of her husband and daughter and participated in community activities considered appropriate for a well-to-do matron. Noun became involved in the League of Women Voters and later the Iowa Civil Liberties Union (ICLU), but these activities did not offer relief from her insecurities.

The turning point came when Noun underwent psychiatric treatment and began to forge an identity that was not defined by her relationship to her mother, husband, or daughter. Her involvement in the feminist movement of the 1960s strengthened her personal identity and brought a new sense of purpose to her work in state and local politics. Taking greater control over her life, Noun left her unsatisfactory

marriage and wrote her first book, a history of the woman suffrage movement in Iowa. She became a charter member of the Iowa Women's Political Caucus and the Des Moines chapter of the National Organization for Women, and she helped to establish the Young Women's Resource Center in Des Moines.

In recounting her personal transformation, Noun provides a commentary on the times in which she lived. Noun's discussion of her attempts to secure paid employment reveals the limited opportunities available to young women of her generation. When, for example, Noun asked her Harvard mentor for help in finding a museum job, he told her to "just go home and get married" (40), sending her back to a series of voluntary positions within the Des Moines art community. In one of the book's most forceful passages, Noun presents a critique of volunteerism, arguing that in a society that equates status with wealth, unpaid labor "reinforces women's low self-image" (118).

Noun's interweaving of her personal experiences and commentary on the history of women reaches its skillful climax with a reconsideration of her relationship with her mother. Noun writes that she now views her mother as a "frustrated feminist who resented the societal restraints she met because she was a woman" (109), and notes that she has recently come to appreciate the career that resulted from her mother's own unfulfilled ambitions. On the closing page of her memoir, Noun writes that she no longer feels ambivalent about collecting art and can now accept her mother's influence "without feelings of rejection or resentment" (137). In fact, she muses, perhaps her collecting of works by women artists represents a type of reconciliation with her mother.

Along with her comments on women's historical experience, Noun examines issues in Iowa history. Discussions of her activities in the League of Women Voters, the ICLU, and various feminist organizations provide an insider's view of Iowa politics. Noun also examines the Jewish experience in Iowa, discussing her grandparents' settlement in the state and recalling her own encounters with anti-Semitism—even within the supposedly enlightened environment of Des Moines's liberal community.

Noun's examination of her life and times is a well-written, honest record of an eighty-year "journey" that the author herself describes as "rough" but ultimately "worthwhile."

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