

rative (3). Such a promise is welcome indeed.

But before we break out the sparkling cider at this refreshing turn of events and celebrate a new era in Book of Mormon studies—a Golden Age in which the book will actually be *studied* and not simply heralded (unread) by followers or dismissed (unread) by skeptics—it’s important to note that Thomas doesn’t meet his own expectations. He sets out to create a book that brackets out questions of the Book of Mormon’s authorship and historical authenticity, but he doesn’t deliver that. Instead, he assumes throughout that the book is Joseph Smith’s own creation and doggedly seeks every opportunity to demonstrate its nineteenth-century character. How very tired. Thomas goes to great lengths to show that Joseph Smith borrowed from early nineteenth-century evangelical jargon about conversion (136), righteous deaths (165), and “wilderness” experiences or spiritually desolate times (93). What is perhaps new in Thomas’s assessment is that he posits an astonishingly well-read Joseph Smith, who by Thomas’s

reckoning must have been familiar with the works of historians Edward Gibbon (190) and Josephus (203), as well as contemporary evangelical preachers such as Lorenzo Dow.

Such reductionism is disappointing in a book that begins so iconoclastically, even brilliantly. The reader is promised a new debate and is instead given a retread of the same question that has dominated Book of Mormon scholarship since 1830: Who wrote the book? Thomas is more sophisticated an interpreter of the text than most, however. If readers will persevere, there are many golden nuggets of exegesis to keep them going, not the least of which is his fine treatment of the problem of “secret combinations” in the last chapter. But after readers finish his book, they should return to the introduction and evaluate whether Thomas has indeed changed the focus of debate about the Book of Mormon as promised. This reviewer answers that question with a disappointed “no,” but hopes that other scholars will feel moved to take up the discussion according to Thomas’s original terms.

Lucy’s Own Voice

Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir, edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson, with an introduction by Irene M. Bates (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 968 pp.

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IN THE WINTER AFTER THE MARTYRDOM OF HER SONS, Joseph and Hyrum,

Lucy Mack Smith dictated a history of her family to Martha Jane Knowlton Coray, a sympathetic schoolteacher in Nauvoo. Two copies were made of the manuscript: one was published as *Biographical Sketches* by Apostle Orson Pratt in 1853 in the *Millennial Star*, and the other went to Utah where Brigham Young suppressed it in 1865. Ostensibly he quashed it because Mother Smith’s memory was faulty, but more likely it was because Lucy argued that

prophetic succession was through the Smith family line. In the next decades George A. Smith and Elias Smith edited and revised the text to reflect the preferences of the LDS hierarchy. Not until 1901, when the RLDS threat was no longer serious, did the church allow the publication of the serialized document in the *Improvement Era*. The 1901 version is the one with which most Mormons are familiar, compiled and edited in 1945 by Preston Nibley, and still in print. More recent attempts to restore the original text have been incomplete: Dan Vogel published a portion of the narrative in *Early Mormon Documents*, and Scott Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor edited *The Revised and Enhanced History of Joseph Smith by His Mother* (Bookcraft 1996), excising some material and standardizing spelling and punctuation.

With all these versions available, why the need for *Lucy's Book*? Jan Shippo, who has praised Lucy Smith's history as "a rare and valuable first-hand account provided by an observer closely connected to the primary participants in the early development of the Mormon movement," argues that the reliability of the 1853 edition rests upon its concordance with the original 1845 Coray manuscript.¹ *Lucy's Book* "is the first one-volume history to arrange the earliest known manuscript source of the text Lucy dictated in 1844-45 with the version printed in England in 1853 by Apostle Orson Pratt" (16). The two documents are arranged in parallel columns, augmented by notes based upon a "fair copy" of the manuscript by Howard Coray (although Anderson states that the number of corrections is "surpris-

ingly small" [16]). Before turning to the document, shrewd readers will study the chart on page 218, which lays out the genealogy of the manuscript. Lucy's narrative is divided into six parts, generally corresponding to the locales of the story; it begins with Smith and Mack family genealogies and ends with the assassination of Lucy's sons, Hyrum and Joseph. A fine introductory essay by Irene Bates sketches the life of Lucy Smith in her historical context. Miscellaneous letters and poems are gathered into a short appendix, followed by a brief epilogue and biographical summaries.

The complicated history of Lucy's text raises central questions about who controls the past and about the interplay between history and memory. One would be foolish to read Lucy's text transparently—each edition bears the imprint of its editor, this one included. *Lucy's Book* is an apt title because Anderson's clearly stated goal is to find "Lucy's own voice behind the layers of words that have accumulated since its writing" (66). In a compelling introductory essay, Anderson agrees with Shippo that the *History* is essentially a family memoir, but Anderson breaks new ground by presenting Lucy Smith as a "model of domestic spirituality" (17). Though brief, Anderson's interpretive framework is useful in understanding Mother Smith in her own right, not only as mother of the prophet and mother of the church.

More to the point is Anderson's extensive essay on the history of the text, accompanied by a detailed chronology extending from 1732 to 2001. She concludes that while the Young-directed revisions of the text

1. Jan Shippo, *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 92.

were not maliciously made, she finds it "unpleasant to see him sneer at a faithful mother of twelve who donated her time and sacrificed her economic well-being, dismissing her as a sensation-seeking would-be novelist" (132). Clearly, this editor's sympathies lie with Lucy Smith, not Brigham Young. Using Howard Coray's "fair copy," Anderson argues that the revised manuscript differs materially from Lucy's writings: the Pratt publication omitted about 10 percent of the rough draft, and 28 percent of the words in the 1853 publication were not present in Lucy's draft. She cites relevant passages of the text to demonstrate the vitality and richness of Lucy's narration and, thus, makes a strong case for returning to Lucy's draft in this impeccably detailed version.

This volume is a summary achievement, recognized by the Best Book Award from the John Whitmer Historical Association and the Best Documentary Book Award from the Mormon History Association. Only someone like

Anderson possesses the editorial skills and attention to detail to present the document fairly in its complicated versions. But *Lucy's Book* does much more than faithfully reproduce "Mormonism's first female autobiography" (11); it supplies us with an interpretation that enhances our understanding of a woman, a family, and a religious movement in its formative years. By foregrounding Lucy and paying attention to the meanings of gender, this book makes a contribution not only to Mormon history, but to the history of American religion. Now that we have a text we can trust, the way is open for reliable scholarly treatments of issues like female spirituality, motherhood, and women in early American religion.

In sum, mass market versions of the *History* simply cannot measure up to the reliability of *Lucy's Book*. Scholars and serious Mormon history aficionados will want this version on their shelves. Finally, it is time to let Lucy speak for herself.