the most significant challenges to Victorian ideas about families and arguably aided Mormon settlement of the Great Basin. Numerous works have already dealt with the secret introduction of polygamy during the early days of the Mormon Church, as well as with Joseph Smith, who founded the Church and promoted plural marriage. This is the first book, however, to study in depth the women Joseph Smith married. Collectively they were diverse. They originated from seven states, Canada, and England; ranged in age from fourteen to fifty-eight; and entered polygamy as virgins, widows, and married women. Those who left accounts of their reasons for marrying gave primacy to religious motives, although for some women romantic attachment or desire for a family connection with the Church’s founder provided additional motivations.

Compton’s task in writing these biographies was not easy. Some women wrote diaries or autobiographies, but others are obscure and left few records. While the book overall is well researched, there are some surprising omissions. Nothing is mentioned about the quarrel between Lucinda Harris (probably Smith’s plural wife at the time) and Elizabeth Marsh, wife of the Twelve Apostles’ president, which contributed to the Marshes’ apostasy. Nor does it quote Zina Huntington’s affidavit that she was Smith’s wife in “very deed,” although it details Smith’s sexual relationships with his wives.

The most significant problem, however, is that the secrecy surrounding these early plural marriages meant few records were kept at the time, and those that were are often enigmatic. Thus, many sources were written long after these marriages took place and often by people not witnesses to the events. Despite the problematic nature of much of the evidence, Compton carries a masterly job in sorting through conflicting accounts, and the book is admirable in its full presentation of the evidence, quoting extensively from the original sources.

While Compton’s conclusions are generally cogent, the book does not substantiate his thesis that polygamy “was a social system that simply did not work in nineteenth-century America” (p. xiii). Compton assumes that a workable system is one creating the twentieth-century ideal of a monogamous dyadic relationship fulfilling the participants’ emotional and interpersonal needs. Thus, he argues that in polygamy the demands on husbands’ resources meant loneliness for plural wives. Although these biographies evince feelings of loneliness, these were more often in response to widowhood or loss of children than to husbands’ absences. All family relationships were important, and relationships other than husband-wife were often most significant. Moreover, the book in-

front every obstacle and meet every danger” (p. 401). Because he stands “for all Indian peoples” (p. 391), Sugden believes that Indians everywhere “have drawn pride and self-respect” (p. 390) from Tecumseh’s memory above all others. Sugden’s adherence notwithstanding, I doubt that this argument would hold up well in conversation with Comanches, Lakotas, or Apaches, for example, who have their own ideas about heroes.

Second, Sugden’s portrayal of Indian people is astonishingly trite. References abound to appearances “as wild as any Indian’s” (p. 8), painted warriors who “raised their ardent to the throbbing of a drum” (p. 27), “yelping warriors” (p. 59), half-naked, drunken warriors (p. 114), “warriors in leather and paint” (p. 134), “stealthily” creeping Indians (p. 235), and, finally, Indians with “blackened faces and feathered heads as if they were fiends from Hell” (p. 235). Is this the “essential context” of Tecumseh’s life? How are we to take seriously a work that descends time and again to descriptions that are at best juvenile and at worst racist?

Last, Sugden ignores deeper cultural and historical complexities, assuming from the beginning that Indians faced only subjugation or futile resistance. “Change and live the American way, or retreat” (p. 8). But as Helen Hornbeck Tanner, Richard White, Carol Devens, and many, many others have demonstrated, frontier cultural encounters were vastly more complicated than Sugden’s scenario. There is no discussion of the syncretism in the Prophet’s religious movement, for example, or of the myriad responses that Indian people used to negotiate and mediate the changes swirling around them. So much for “thorough research” that “in the history and historical culture of Tecumseh’s people.”

Because Tecumseh rests on assumptions and interpretations long out of favor among historians and ethnographers, readers hoping for a nuanced ethnographic account will find little to ponder. Although a grand narrative, as an analysis of the complex cultural questions that faced Indians and whites alike, this book is a disappointment.

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Conflicting evidence creating unsolvable puzzles and general fascination with polygamy make In Sacred Loneliness intriguingly interesting. Mormon polygamy is important because it was among
Review of Books

Defiant Peacemaker: Nicholas Trist in the Mexican War. By Wallace Ohrt. (College Station, Texas A&M University Press, 1998. xi + 190 pp. $29.95)

Cassov empot! This book is not as advertised. Of the twelve chapters in this slender volume, only five relate to Trist and the Mexican War. Or, to put it another way, only one-third of the 167 pages of text is devoted to Trist’s Mexican involvement. Instead, most of the book treats Trist’s life and career before the war and then a final chapter on his pitiful postwar story.

The author hopes that Trist will find a larger place in the history of our country (see p. 167). But not much offered herein warrants either admiration or a reappraisal of Trist. One of the several mystifying claims posited by Ohrt holds that Trist’s problems were actually the result of James K. Polk’s flaws. Had Polk’s personality “permitted him the comfortable relationship with Trist that Trist had earlier enjoyed with Andrew Jackson, our history might have turned out quite different” (p. xi). How so, one might reasonably ask? Ohrt does not explain.

At the age of forty-five, Trist became the chief clerk in Buchanan’s State Department, yet one would be hard pressed to single out notable accomplishments that marked his prior career. To be sure, he had married well when he wed Virginia Randolph, Jefferson’s granddaughter, and he used this connection to some advantage across the years. He parlayed a meager clerkship in the John Quincy Adams administration’s State Department into a more prominent role during the Jackson presidency. Indeed, Trist and Jackson developed a mutual appreciation that eventuated in Trist’s appointment as U.S. consul to Havana.

Regarding Trist in Mexico, Ohrt tells a familiar story, but one that is sympathetic to Trist and hostile to Polk. Trist had to negotiate not only with Mexican officials, a tremendous challenge for cer-


Manifest Destiny and Empire: American Antebellum Expansionism is a collection of six well-developed and insightful essays produced by proven scholars of nineteenth-century America and submitted as part of the thirteenth Walter Prescott Webb Memorial Lectures. Together these authors bring added dimension and breadth to one of the most significant and formative epochs in the development of the republic—that of territorial expansion.

Robert W. Johannsen’s opening essay pays due homage to John L. O’Sullivan, discusses the concept of Manifest Destiny as he propagated it, and highlights the influence of Ralph Waldo Emerson’s Transcendentalism. Cautioning against oversimplification, Johannsen stresses that Manifest Destiny was multidimensional, cutting across party and geographic boundaries, and affected by an enhanced knowledge of the wider world, the advance of technology that made that wider world more accessible, racism that accepted