Juanita Brooks has her work set out for her: she needs to explain a historical event that has long been ignored and lied about. She must avoid sounding biased and present herself as a reputable historian. One of her challenges in this undertaking is how she should deal with the large amounts of supernaturalism surrounding the Mountain Meadows Massacre. Although she does periodically use some supernatural accounts for dramatic evidence and to support her own hypothesis in small amounts, Brooks typically discredits the supernatural aspects (both folkloric and religious) of the Mountain Meadows Massacre,

While Brooks is capable of dismissing the supernatural in folklore traditions, and also in her own religion, she does sometimes lapse into giving ear to supernaturalism. Frequently this is for effect, such as while describing a Mormon woman living in fear of the mobs in Illinois who feels a "heavy foreboding of evil" and flees, joining "other wagons…all impelled by the certainty that to remain long would mean death" (8). Brooks doesn't dismiss this prompting as a superstitious story but as a factual experience. Likely for the same dramatic effect, she includes that Brigham Young, whom she later evaluates as a man and not a prophet, "had predicted that 'if our enemies would give us ten years unmolested … we would never be driven again.' Well, the ten years were up, ten years to the day" (18).

As a historian writing a book for lay people, Brooks may be excused for these inclusions of dramatic intent; however she makes the mistake in including supernatural evidence in her defense of John D. Lee. She relates how when a little girl was gravely sick, Lee "kneeled by her bed and prayed for her. He promised her that she should live and become a mother in Israel. She was instantly healed" (203). Brooks relates a second related account. Lee promised another sick girl that she "should live to be a mother in Israel. She grew up to womanhood…and has sixteen children" (204). These supernatural stories are not qualified at all, but left to stand on their own before Brooks informs us that descendents of Lee "feel that he was a great and good man—a martyr" (204). These two recollections may also serve a dramatic purpose, but the acceptance of faith healing by an individual she defends weakens Brooks' objectivity as a historian. Fortunately this is the exception rather than the rule.

Brooks discredits many of the local legends concerning the massacre. Folklore surrounded the event, likely because of the violent nature of the incident, and partially because of the years of denial that the community experienced. Brooks most strongly discredits one account that claims when the bodies were found, none of them had "been mutilated or disfigured by decay" (128). This Brooks describes as "sheerest nonsense," and explains that "anyone who knows anything at all of the progress of putrefaction in the human corpse" wouldn't have made such a ridiculous statement (128, 129). She explains that the account of a beautiful woman, a tender girl and her mother and a grandfather all being perfectly preserved was "clearly written for effect" (129). Other local sources believed in a "beautiful young woman whose body the wild animals left entirely untouched (214). Brooks explains this as the product of "vivid imaginations" (214). She similarly dismisses as "folklore and legend" local accounts that "strange forms ris[ing] out of the earth and…moans and shrieks" haunt the site of the massacre (214). It lends to Brooks' credibility that she doesn't identify folklore as truth, but will her position as a member of a church conflict with her position as a historian?
Brooks is, most impressively, able to step away from the supernatural aspects of the church in which she believes. She uses objective language in describing spiritual events, and uses scripture and sermons as indicators of a cultural phenomenon. Brooks starts out, in the preface of the book, informing the reader that she is "a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints … born into the church ... and have always been a loyal member" (xxv). Nevertheless, as she begins to tell the background of her church, she distances herself from her personal convictions about the truth of her religion. She tells the story (which she may believe was the beginning of the fullness of time) with a critical historian's eye. Joseph Smith "claimed to have had his first vision" at age fourteen, and the Book of Mormon "purports to be a history … translated from gold plates" which Smith "said was revealed to him by an angel" (3). Brooks identifies clearly that this subject can be approached from both a personal, religious point of view and also from a purely academic point of view. By making such a sudden break, the reader may be subtly reminded that this book should be read from a historical point of view, instead of being read as a threat to any religious belief.

Later in the book, describing the rebaptism of many Mormons, she includes the cultural hope that "God would avenge the death of the Prophet and the sufferings of His saints" (13). Brooks does not take this prophecy as fact, but as part of the social movement that "served to encourage fanaticism" (13). Brooks, at one point, refers to Joseph Smith as many of the Utahan Mormons did: as a "martyr whose death God would wish avenged" (55). Superficially, this looks like she is admitting her own belief of Smith's martyrdom, however, she quotes in the footnotes that these members "hope to avenge their [Joseph and Hyrum Smith's] blood…as long as there is one descendent of the murderers on the earth" (55). She also describes the "'many predictions in regard to the Triumph of Israel'" over the standing army outside the territory as "fervor of war" (25). As with the predictions of Zion's triumph over their foes to avenge their martyred prophet, she does not try to defend the religious connotations of the prophecy, but uses it only to describe the feelings of the people. She examines the Church as a social institution in this book, presenting the speeches and scriptures that riled the people. Brooks quotes the 98th section of the Doctrine and Covenants, "'thine enemy is in thine hands and thou art justified'" not to make the appeal God had made the emigrants defenseless so they could be killed, but because this was a scripture that was popular at the time as a justification of the war to come with American troops (59).

Brooks similarly quotes talks of Mormon religious leaders, including George A. Smith's "discourse on the spirit that actuated the United State towards this people-full of hostility and virulence" (37). This particular speech was "hailed with … enthusiasm" when Smith says "I found myself preaching a military discourse" (39, 38). Instead of claiming that this speech was God-inspired, Brooks claims it is "of especial interest because … of the intensity of feeling general in the south" (40). Historical feeling and events that involve Mormon points of faith are more difficult to dismiss than the religious folklore that claimed "because of the blood which had been shed there, God had cursed the land [Mountain Meadows] so that nothing could grow" but Brooks keeps a historian's tone (214).

Overall, despite some pieces of supernatural evidences, Brooks is a serious historian who looks at folklore and religion not as historical fact but as cultural influences affecting a group of people. This characteristic makes her a historian who is more creditable and professional and one whom readers are more willing to trust because of her distinction between the supernatural and fact.