

been dictated by the hope of speeding publication. Certainly, the volume bears evidence of haste. Professor Campbell's essay on Brigham Young's life-long mission doesn't seem to fit the narrower topic of his speeches. Its apparent virtue to the editors may have been its availability, not suitability. Of greater disappointment, no textual explanations are given to help the reader navigate the sometimes difficult-to-follow nineteenth-century sayings of Young. Readers are left to wander among them at their own peril.

Nor does the publisher provide any kind of context for the speeches—places are rarely given and circumstances not at all. Did Young actually play a major role in the writing of the essay dated 1 January 1841, which lists Willard Richards as co-author, with all its heavily-larded scriptures, which were so untypical of Young? Wouldn't the reader like to know that the discourse of 18 June 1865 was formally presented for the benefit of visiting U.S. vice-president Schuyler Colfax and was regarded by

some Saints as a belabored flop—a comeuppance for Young's putting on airs for a "foreign" dignitary? And isn't it important to know that Young's sermon on the resurrection, 8 October 1875, wasn't delivered by the church leader at all, but was formally read by Counselor George Q. Cannon?

The publisher acknowledges that it was not its intent to provide this kind of editorial apparatus, but merely to make available to readers an accessible collection of Young's important sermons. For me, however, by the kind of the speeches selected and by providing no editorial assistance, the publisher limits its contribution. It provides important clues about the "essential" Brigham Young but unwraps only a layer or two of the obstinate enigma of his personality and thought. One suspects that the church leader would not be surprised. He seemed to cultivate the puzzle. "If any man inquires about Brigham," he once said during one of his sermons, "tell them he is Brigham, yet only a little more so" (13 Nov. 1858, LDS archives).

## A Memorable Tribute

Phyllis Barber. *How I Got Cultured: A Nevada Memoir*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1992. 189 pp.

Reviewed by Don J. McDermott, associate professor, English, National Cheng Kung University, Tainan, Taiwan.

*HOW I GOT CULTURED*, Phyllis Barber's memoir of her Mormon youth and adolescence in 1950s Nevada, has won accolades too numerous to mention. It

has been warmly received in publications as mainstream and established as *Publishers Weekly* and the *Kirkus Review*. Nor should one neglect the fact of its winning the Associated Writer's Program Award for Creative Nonfiction. One can safely say this is a good book.

Having been raised in the Mormon faith, I recognize in her reminiscence the church that time left behind. Hers are memoirs of Mutual Improvement Association dances, ward talent nights full of

shtick, "Rose Night" initiations for young ladies, and the insular attitudes which pitted the "Only True Church" against a hostile world. This particular conflict is well illustrated when, towards the end of her narrative, Barber relates how, as a member of a highstepping drill team, the Rhythmettes, she was asked to ride atop a founder's day float sponsored by one of the casinos in Las Vegas.

Many of her achievements to this point had been motivated by a desire to be noticed, and in adolescence this desire metastasized into something desperate (though still within the bounds of Mormon modesty). But upon learning that the parade is on Sunday, she winces over the consequences of breaking the Sabbath. She tries to rationalize that God surely will forgive her one trespass—to be a float queen for a day, after all. I wondered to myself then, as I had at many earlier points in her narrative, if a non-Mormon audience would find this as quaint as I did? Perhaps. Mormons are not the only people who try to keep the Sabbath day holy. But what are non-Mormon readers to envisage in reference to stake road shows or visiting Maori dancers (with their special kinship to the Nephites) or even, and especially, the dreams and solemnity to be found in a temple sealing?

This episode becomes less provincial and more poignant when Barber gets her gown fitted in the wardrobe room of one of the casinos and blurts out to a world-weary seamstress (and former Nazi concentration camp inmate), "I love God." The seamstress does not

reply to this non sequitur, though certainly the reader must infer from this silence that in the collision of the two worlds—the one containing Dachau and Las Vegas show girls, the other Boulder City and former MIA Maids—that "the love of God" is discourse which has lost its meaning.

Barber's memoirs are gently satirical at times. I suspect the ironies and nostalgia will best be appreciated by "insiders." Indeed, if the memoirs have any flaws at all, they are those passages where Mormon customs, rites, and beliefs are briefly summarized so as to bring the uninitiated reader up to speed. The didactic passages aside, there is still much that will be appreciated by all. But we are talking about a different sort of awareness and pleasure.

Many critics have found Barber's memoirs to be a fine coming-of-age journal—and in this role it will speak to women of both feminist and more traditional attitudes. Beyond this, they speak intimately of a sort of Janus-faced culture. For example, Barber's world at large is nestled ironically between the two great technological achievements of the century: the Hoover Dam and the atomic testing grounds. Her world made small, the Mormon world, is also polar. It is supercilious and silly in its narrow earnestness; it is also profoundly attached to values and affections not lost without a great sadness. Her book is endearing, and I believe, a lasting contribution. Church members who pass this title by will miss a memorable tribute, one which they alone will be best able to appreciate.